

Portals

1992

Portals

The Literary Journal
of

Purdue University North Central

Volume 21

1992



This volume
is dedicated
to the
North Central Campus
in recognition
of its
25th Anniversary
1967-1992

Foreword

The 1992-93 school year marks the 25th anniversary of the Purdue University North Central campus, and we believe that the exceptional quality of the writing in this year's commemorative edition of *Portals* can stand as a source of pride for anyone associated with this institution.

Due in great measure to the creative publicity campaign devised by assistant editors Danne Benjamin and Scott Scheffer, the number of submissions to this year's publication soared to an all-time high, a total of 189 entries, three times the number from last year. An education major and a business major respectively, Danne and Scott have brought a renewed vigor to this year's undertaking. Their tireless efforts are largely responsible for whatever merit this journal possesses.

This issue of *Portals* also marks the introduction of a few changes in format. Competitive categories this year—for essay, fiction, poetry, and the Stanfield award—require freshmen to compete with everybody else, researched essays to compete equally with non-researched ones, and fiction and poetry to be considered separately. Perhaps the most astounding result of the changes was both the quantity and quality of the entries for poetry; the winners add a hard-edged seriousness and power to the journal.

It has been our sincere aim from the beginning to make *Portals* decidedly first rate in every way. To the degree we have succeeded, we have a lot of people to thank: Chancellor Alspaugh for his encouragement and generosity, Joy Banyas and the Printing Services staff for their professionalism and skill, the judges for their time and expertise, the photographers for their impressive contributions again this year. We would also like to thank the staff of *The Spectator*, our student newspaper, which has been so very helpful all along the way.

Most of all, we thank the contributors. Their outstanding efforts serve as an undeniable testament to a diverse and multitalented student body here at Purdue University North Central. That much hasn't changed in 25 years.

Editors:

Dr. Mary F. Norton

Dr. K. Gene Norton

Assistant Editors:

Danne Benjamin

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(not included in this volume)

Big Boys Don't Cry (short story)

James Norris

The Rulers of Westville (essay)

Terry Vaupel

Why The Japanese Won't

Buy American Rice (essay)

Betty Vania

You Know You're An

English Major When... (essay)

Julie Thompson

United We Stand? (essay)

Phil Anton

The History of Intolerance
(poem)

Peter O'Rourke

Eliotel Demiseus (poem)

Ralph Shore

Judges

Essays (82 entries)

Dr. Patricia Buckler

Professor Barbara Truesdell

Professor Paul Madrid

Jane Mason

Poetry (75 entries)

Dr. Thomas Young

Dr. Gene Norton

Dr. Mary Norton

Danne Benjamin

Fiction (21 entries)

Dr. John Pappas

Dr. Roger Schlobin

Dr. Gene Norton

Scott Scheffer

The John Stanfield Award
(11 entries)

Professor Hal Phillips

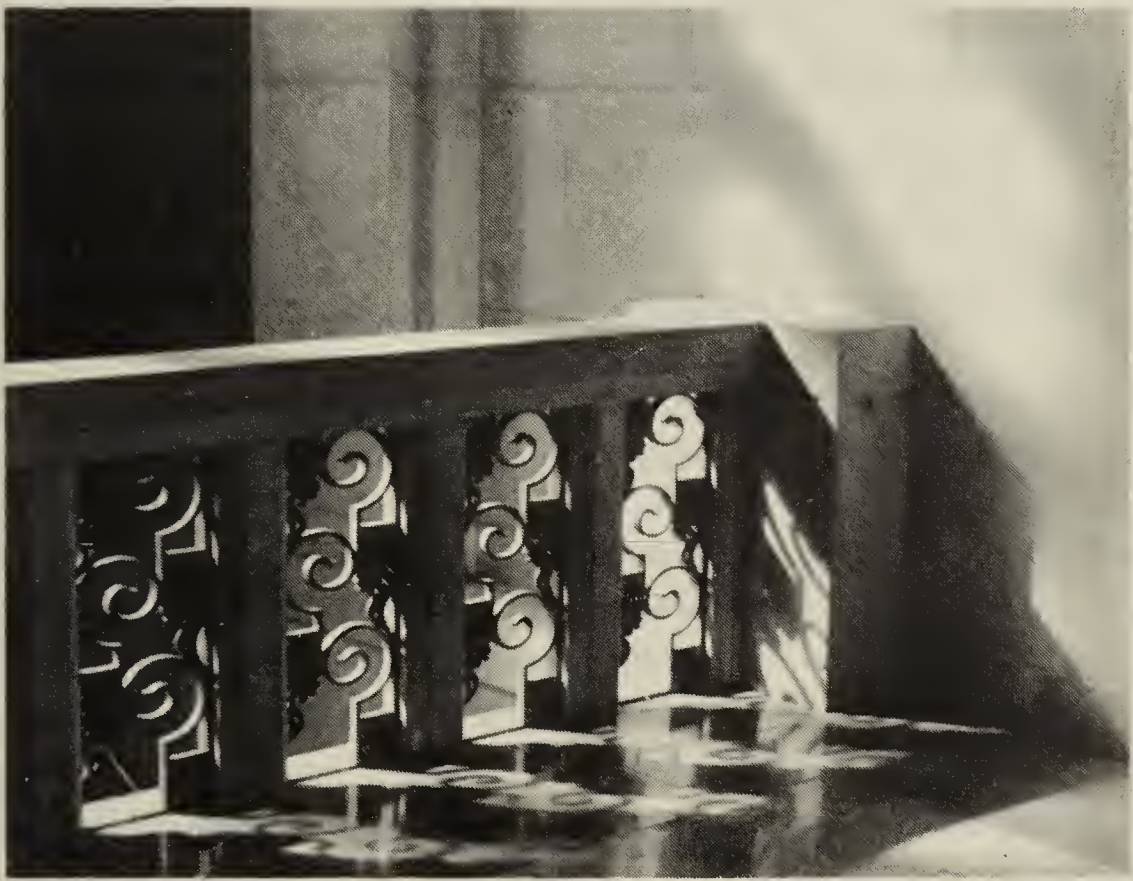
Professor Barbara Lootens

Photography and Art

(47 entries)

Editorial Staff

Jennifer Edwards



James Norris

Witness to the Wind

On a moonlit night, not so dark and
not so long ago...

I was witness to the wind...
as it caressed dead leaves
that lie upon the forest floor.

It touched them, lightly at first,
teasing them...
and somehow enchanting them to rise...
To arise and dance and then...
to dance some more.

Tiny whirlwinds of gold and brown,
they tumbled and they stumbled...
as they danced around...
and around above the ground.
They danced their dance...a silent ballet.

Then, in a moment so quiet, yet so loud,
There came upon the wood...a shadow...a cloud.
And through the trees, a faint mist touched the leaves.
Slowing the tiny dancers...
Who had taken over the floor.

In slow motion they danced now,
as the rain kissed them and...
And bade them...lie down, sweet leaves...
Lie down sweet leaves...
And dance no more.

I was witness to the wind...
On that moonlit autumn night...
Not so dark, and not so long ago.
And, witness to the wind...
They danced till the end...
Their tiny dance for me.

Half the World

After all these years, I am still amazed at the negative images Americans have for Iran. But I wasn't here in America when it all began. I wasn't here to see what was on the news about the "crazy radicals" trying to overthrow the shah. I wasn't here to read about the "religious fanatics" who were burning and looting. I wasn't here to be told about the "hatred for the American people" that the Iranians supposedly felt. I was there. I was there, living in the city of Isfahan, amongst my caring Iranian neighbors. My images of Iran are very different from those around me now. Even today, much of the magic and mystique of the ancient capital city of Persia remains. It was said, "Isfahan is half the world." And in those days, that must have literally been true. It was the hub of ancient economics, learning, science, and the arts. Nearly all important land routes for trade passed through the city.

Any route into Isfahan crosses hundreds of miles of open, barren desert. The few buildings first visible seem to be but oddly shaped protrusions of the earth itself—as in fact they are. Rounded mounds within squared frames join haphazardly, side to side, in short, segmented sections, and finally lengthen and grow as they snake toward the city center. Your eyes follow these lines of monotonous monotone.

Suddenly, an explosion of brilliant turquoise blue bursts in the distance. As one nears, magnificent domes and towers, palaces, and minarets take shape. Long reflecting pools, sparkling fountains and lush gardens form the setting for these jewels.

One pair of towers flanks the tall arched entrance to the miles of the city's very veins and arteries: the Bazaar.

The city *is* the Bazaar—the Bazaar, the city. It is here that all life in the city flows. Clothing is sewn, pots hammered, money exchanged, doctors sought, political beliefs evolved. God is worshipped, mystic sects gather, crime flourishes, and revolutions are born.

Was the Bazaar in Isfahan still "half the world" when I last saw it?

...

It is a scorching September day. The sun on the south-facing desert-dust pale brick entrance wall makes it white hot. The contrast of the

cold, deep aquamarine of the ornate decorative tiles intensifies the sense of heat. (How long has this mud-mortared structure survived? Two hundred years? Surely more.) The flowery arabesques in sky tones and the intricate web of vaulting disguise all its solid, sturdy permanence. Even the height of the arched entrance gives it an airy lightness.

Before even entering, I can see that what lies beyond is quite different than anything on the outside. Still within sight of sunlight and day—the section where most tourists stay—is a jumble of goods. The clutter of the merchants (with an eye for foreigners) nearly spills out into the light. Cotton shirts made of pomegranate-skin stained cloth hang on nails on the wall. Colorful velvet and brocade vests, paintings, bags, and plates hang crammed together just inside.

Beyond is dark and deep. To know what is within, one must commit oneself. Past the cavernous mouth, just beyond the sunlight, the Bazaar truly begins. The impenetrable darkness becomes cold shade and shadows. The dusty ground is damp, slaked by each merchant along the way with a long-necked “aftabeh” (water pitcher). Just enough of the earthy powder hangs in the air to give a radiant, reflective solidity to the slanted column of sunlight that thrusts down from the circular opening in the domed ceiling. What bits of the floors that are exposed in the tiny cluttered shops are squared stones, rounded edges worn smooth by centuries of feet.

The smell, beside the dark, cool dampness, is in every corner and down every alley. There is no other smell on earth like Iranian soil, and when it takes on moisture, its musky pungency becomes sharp and clear. As I weave my way through the snaking passages, other odors will superimpose and mingle with this base—sometimes with no apparent source. Paint and perfume, spices and incense, goat wool, onions, hot metal, stale urine, sweaty men, and women fresh from the “hamman” (bath house), will be somewhere nearby as I move from section to section along the way.

The shops that at first seem so forceful a presence, filling all of one’s senses so, now seem an ingenious façade for the real pulse of living that I know throbs furtively behind heavy wooden doors and draped back rooms.

The facade is real enough, of course—simply another facet of reality. These shops *are* the heart of the city, for they are the suppliers of survival for the townspeople. Food, shelter, and warmth, as well as beauty and creativity all come from these stalls and booths and the workshops above them.

People quietly seek out what they need. None are “well-dressed.” Many wear plastic sandals and clothing that does not fit—mostly in poor

copies of Western styles. Women wear the traditional “chador”—a drab semicircle of cotton, held closed in clenched teeth, exposing little more than one eye. To my vision, these people do not look like they could control the fate of half the world. But they certainly did in centuries past, and now, on oil-rich lands, they still spread their influence.

But I lose these thoughts as I walk on, mesmerized by the Bazaar. The cloth shop is among the first. The pieces of fabric are block-printed, deep red upon blue upon black, with hand-carved wooden blocks, strapped on the hard palms of men.

There is an “antique” shop with old used clothing, leather cradles, camel bags, battered samovars, pots and pans, and bits of broken trinkets. The old man here, as worn and rickety as the things he sells, can never quite get the prices right. What he thinks are treasures and sells at high prices, the foreigners think are pieces of junk. His cheap “junk” is oohed and ahed over and quickly sold without the least bit of bargaining.

Hand-painted Persian miniatures of scenes from the *Rubiyat* of Omar Khayyam sell for the price of a dollar or two to hundreds of dollars in the next shop. They are done in softly muted colors, in a fineness of detail only possible with a “brush” made of a single hair (or so they claim). A few are done on paper, but most are on thin slices of camel bone—an affordable substitute for the expensive ivory ones. I was at first puzzled by the “miniatures” that are nearly two feet tall, but I have come to realize that it is the delicate complexity of the details that qualifies them for this classification.

In one sense, there is no creativity in these beautiful works of “art.” The poses have been copied from very old originals, over and over, through generation after generation. It is done out of love and respect for both the original painting and its creator, as well as the *Rubiyat*—an almost freak stroke of literary genius by a man who was a mathematician, not a poet. And far better than the low-priced paintings, are the frames they come in from the next shop.

Along with the picture frames, there are also boxes of all shapes and sizes, holders for match boxes, cigarettes, pencils and other simple objects, all covered with the tiniest mosaic work in geometric patterns. Ivory or bone is used for white, a dark wood (perhaps ebony) for black, brass for gold color, and red or green stained wood for accents. Each piece is triangular, and in the finest pieces, barely wider than a pencil lead.

There is no pretense or pretending about how these are constructed—no one claims to put in each piece separately. Three-sided rods of each

material and color are glued together—sometimes 30 or more at a time—to form a six-sided bundle with a diameter of about a centimeter. Once firmly cemented, the bundle is cut into thin slices. The slices are then glued, side-to-side, on the wooden item. Somehow, this doesn't seem to be “cheating” to me. I admire their simple solution to the otherwise endless work.

Sharing the concept of “copied creativity,” the next shop is owned by a rug merchant—with whom I inadvertently developed a profitable relationship very early on.

It must have been my very first trip alone to the Bazaar. I walked in, partly interested and partly drawn by idle curiosity over the bargaining being done by a German couple (in English) for a dozen or so prayer rugs. I didn't know much about the workings of the carpet market at the time, but I did know the Germans were willing to pay too much. Feeling reassured by this bit of knowledge, I looked around. I was fascinated by one rug that was of average size, quality, and design, but had a blue-violet wool as one of the predominant colors. The dealer immediately came over to me and said, “Only 14,000 rials!” (\$210). I laughed and said, “No, I don't think so.” The couple was busy discussing choices, so he stayed with me. I said no again, acting quite disinterested in bargaining because I genuinely had no desire to buy anything. He suddenly dropped to 12,000 rials (\$180) and then to 10,000! I quickly calculated that he had dropped \$70 and was now down to \$150. I wondered why he was trying to “unload” this one on me and turned it this way and that looking for flaws of any kind. (I could find none). I suppose the dealer took my interest to be a sure sign of a sale because he pushed on. I just wanted to leave. Seeking a graceful exit, I assured him I thought it was indeed worth the price, but it was simply impossible. I had only 6,000 rials with me, turning out my pockets. “Sold!” he shouted at me—and not sounding very friendly about it either. He tromped off to tie up the carpet. I had just purchased my very first—also unwanted—carpet. I must have earned the reputation of being an expert haggler in the process too. He always visibly cringed when he saw me coming after that, but he also consistently gave me the best prices in town.

I never did buy any of his expensive Qon silks, nor Nains, nor Isfahanis. I only bought the smaller, coarser tribal rugs. But that seemed to please him. These were dark, warm colors to sit on to drink tea with friends; these were the thicker carpets to lay bedding on, to keep out the cold from the stone floor beneath. These were carpets to live with, not to sell for a fat profit.

Alongside the carpet shop is a place to buy decorative trays, brass lanterns cut with lacy holes to let out the light, small silver vases, spoons, and cabled holders. The trays are wonderful things—heavy, thick, pure copper with a silver gray “sefied” (tin) coating, hammered with fine-pointed chisels into scenes from the walls in Persepolis or the flowery patterns like those on the most beautiful carpets. The indentations are filled with a black, sooty substance to enhance the designs. It rubs off all over my fingers. These pieces are used as wall plaques or the tops of small end tables.

There are some other trays, however, that are not sooty, but are over-polished until the bright coppers shows through the shiny silver here and there, wherever the polisher has leaned into his work. The flat surface of these trays is level and smooth, the edge turned up and gently pinched into a fluted lip. But these trays really aren’t for the tourists at all, though they are a luxury. They will be used as a communal serving tray for some special family feast. They will be heaped high with fragrant, fluffy Iranian rice spiced with saffron and sultanas—or perhaps carry a whole lamb set on thin, flat whole-wheat bread and garnished with pickled carrots and cauliflower.

Upstairs each artisan sits cross-legged on an old cushion with his work in his lap or on a low bench before him. A very thick layer of semi-flexible tar-like substance on the back of each piece helps to absorb some of the shock and some of the harsh metallic sound of the pounding. But here in the shop, the thick ceiling muffles the sound so that while wandering and browsing, I am only faintly aware that a flock of trapped woodpeckers must have gone berserk in the attic.

The next shop is the transition point. There is, in a practical sort of way, the same pseudo-creativity in the wares here, but much less tourist appeal. Here an old leather-hard man, dry and cracked along the edges of his feet and fingers, sells his copper cooking pots.

His is a tiny place—barely more than a large niche of a once white-washed wall. He always sits here on a folded piece of an old blanket. He always wears what looks like baggy old pajama bottoms, an over-sized hand-me-down shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, a vest that might once have been part of a Western suit, and a rounded felt hat, discolored by age. One believes him when he says his pots will last forever.

I stand here and watch him work with his simple tools on simple materials of simple shapes. But it’s like watching a master illusionist. When he finally holds his finished piece at arm’s length and slowly turns it to check its perfect symmetry, its shape pleases me at the depth of my being,

and with its flawless, smooth seaming. I have no idea where it came from.

He hands me the pot without a word, without expression. The pot is the statement. The once-flat side is now a graceful concave curve; the bottom edge circles to a slightly larger ring than the top rim. The bottom reflects the same curve to a round, rocking surface. This pot is not made to sit on an electric burner. It will sit firmly on the open flame of a gas cooker, but is most secure nestled on a bed of hot coals.

This pot is already “finished.” It does not need to be a part of a family for a time to develop its identity. Its surface is already covered with subtle indentations that look more like the pressings of fingertips than dents from a hammer. It is not shiny but has a soft patina, and the bottom is already blackened. A comfortable handle clasps each side and a snug no-nonsense cover fits with easy certainty. I pull out 200 rials (\$3) while the old man wraps the pot in newspaper and ties it up with a piece of gaudy pink plastic cord from the stall across the way.

The plastic here doesn’t offend me. At this point, it is an amusement. Every day traditional items—such as the pitcher used to take to the toilet in place of toilet paper—all appear in plastic. Most are nearly exact copies. Plastic slip-on shoes have molded eyelets, shoelaces, and stitching. Carrying baskets have a reedy texture; small containers have a woody grain. For some reason, the careful duplicating process breaks down when colors are chosen. Outrageous psychedelic colors make me want to giggle. This is just about the only intrusion of the technological “improvements” of the modern world in the entire Bazaar.

At this point, I notice the passageway narrows; the alleys that lead off are less frequent and darker. Shops and stalls are smaller still. They have walls of wooden drawers and shelves now aged a deep mahogany color. The edges of the wood are smoothly rounded and nearly black from centuries of touches. Some shops have old inky, frizzy wiring protruding from high on the drab wall and hung with tired spider webs. But it is clear the light at sunset will come from the gas lantern with the ashen silk mantle that waits on the floor in a corner. No young men hawk their wares here. Only old men quietly wait.

In the tobacco shop, dry but pliant leaves are tied in bundles and stacked on shelves. Pieces of pipes and used replacement parts can be bought. Nothing is wasted, certainly no time. A boy of seven sits on the single stone step, half in and half out of the shop. His clothes are not clean; his hands are. He is laboriously copying out of the *Qur'an* in slow immature strokes. He writes from memory.

The boy's grandfather sits on a low wooden stool behind him. He is leaning forward, forearms resting on his knees, with his hands clasped. He is intent on watching every movement of the boy's ink pen. His old eyes sparkle with living pride. A potential customer finally walks away.

The smells from the spice stall reach out from scores of wooden bins, each about a foot square. Most of the colors and textures are completely unidentifiable to me even now after years of sniffing. Whole and powdered tumeric, henna leaves, cinnamon bark, lumps of frankincense and myrrh, cloves, indigo, curly bits of lichen, dried roots, antimony, and cannabis seeds are some of the standard items. Now, since the opium has been harvested, there are also wooden crates of nearly-brown poppy seed pods, each with a scoring of six parallel lines gently flowing down the sides.

A donkey, heavily loaded with burlap-wrapped bales, plods past me. A man trots behind to keep up. They turn into a wide but short dead-end passage and disappear behind a large, high pair of heavy wooden, arched doors. I can see sunlight is beyond.

I step through the doors and am momentarily sun-blinded after being in the dim pathways of the Bazaar. I am in an old caravanserai. Less than a generation ago, camel caravans were brought into this open, unpaved courtyard for the night. The two floors of single rooms, all opening directly to the outside, housed the travelers. One room surely served as the gate-keeper's quarters, another as a tea room, and another as a place to face Makkah and pray.

Time has taken its toll on this caravanserai. The window frames and shutters, doors, and benches are all splintered and sun-bleached, nearly the color of the crumbling mud-brick structure itself. A small skeleton of a sycamore still stands in one corner. A thin, dry pistatio tree is barely managing to shade the small square pool—once used for washing clothes and watering the animals—in the middle. Now it is deathly still and quiet. Some of the rooms have piles of broken tools covered with years of dust; some are being used for storage. Short stacks of Isfahani ceramic tiles are tied with cord. Each is hand painted with old court scenes of princes hunting or ladies pouring wine. There are bales of cotton, a pile of sheepskins, a string of Chinese enamel teapots, and a box of earthen water jugs.

The courtyard is no larger than a small yard in my hometown and seems completely closed off except for the main entrance—as they usually are. Yet I see no sign of a donkey nor the man that I followed in.

I pass the wool dyers. In the back of this deep place, huge vats bubble

over open fires tended by men whose hands and arms are stained in deep midnight blue or dark blood red. After the wool is dried upon the roof, it will go to families of carpet weavers.

Nearby, a faint, rhythmical creaking can be heard from a dark, narrow doorway. In a room behind a room, sesame seeds are being pressed between two massive grinding stones. They lie flat, one on the other. The top one has a wooden beam that sticks out. To this beam, a camel is tied. He is blindfolded. For 15 or 20 years, he has walked in the same circle every day, pulling the stone with him. He never stops, never is prodded. I hope he is not tied here if the owner falls ill. How many days would this camel persevere until he dropped from exhaustion?

I think of the other creatures in the city who live in the dark, seldom seen by people—the “jube” dogs, feral animals who move in packs and live in the city’s old underground waterways they are named after. They are abused and stoned when they are seen because of both fear and hatred based on stories associated with religious heroes. They have learned to be completely nocturnal, hunting and scavenging only in the middle of the night.

They are not the only ones who live secret, underground lives, feared and hated by those around them. It is these others that make the Bazaar the power that it is. It is these that determine lives and events far beyond the bowels of the Bazaar. They are the dealers and the merchants, but they are also the smugglers, the mystic Sufis, the gentle B’hais, the fanatic radicals, the “men of Strength,” the poets, politicians, and mullahs.

Their lives are underground in every sense of the word. Their meetings and gatherings are clandestine, and some are held under the city’s surface. Hundreds of years ago, Shah Abbas brought in thousands of Armenians for cheap labor (putting off their genocide for a few centuries) and made extensive changes politically, socially, and environmentally. One of the architectural miracles built by him was a dual system of waterways and tunnels, never to be improved upon to this day. The waterways (or “jubas”) run above and below ground, carrying both their fresh water and sewage. Some are routed through larger tunnels that run under the city from the Bazaar to the Zayandeh “Rud” (river) some distance to the south. These were secret passages to be used as escape routes during troubled times. Originally, there must have been an unbelievably extensive network, for even today, sections are unexpectedly found when new foundations are dug. Many sections have collapsed or been filled in over the hundreds of years, forming forgotten, isolated, or dead-end segments. It is said that these have

been—and are—used by Isfahan's true shapers of destiny. It is here martial arts were kept alive during times of suppression. Now, arms are smuggled and stored here, illegal protests printed, and government overthrows planned. Here, the dervishes still dance themselves into a trance of ecstasy and enlightenment.

I know every route through the Bazaar in Isfahan. I know where every shop is and where every item can be purchased. I know where I can eat, find clean drinking water, and even a flush toilet. I know how to judge the quality of goods and what prices I should pay. And I have no idea what is really happening here. It is hard for me to understand how I can love a place so completely and so deeply, knowing so little about the things that give it its real life force and character.

Isfahan is no longer "half the world." It is a whole and complete realm, exquisitely unique.

James Henderson

The Plight of Homeless People

It hurts to see

Barking Dogs

squatting outside

Open Doors

in the rain

Worse...

It hurts to hear

Doors Closing

Barks Fading

like water

down a drain

Jennifer Edwards



Paper Mirror

A piece of paper: spread out it is smooth and white like a tightly fitted bed sheet, neat and unwrinkled, inviting alteration of its purity, whiteness. It silently calls to the imagination like the smell of freshly cut grass calls to our youth to grab bat and ball on a warm summer's day. Paper is the field for the mind's favorite game: creation. It beckons to the creator like the undisturbed ivories of a grand piano beckon to the musical artist. It is not only persuasive, but, put to use, it can change the emotions of people of all ages.

To a child a piece of paper can bring joy by folding it into the shape of a plane and sending it soaring through the air. It can be fearsome in the form of a school exam or a poor report card. It can instill pride through the creation of a painting or drawing so extraordinary that it earns the position of display on the refrigerator. Paper can be the source of endless amusement for a child in the form of coloring books, pop-up books, and playing cards. It is an ideal tool for the creative development of a child's mind.

As a child matures into a young adult, paper can hold many new properties not realized before. It can bring anxiety in the form of college applications, monthly bills, and traffic citations. It can stir deep feelings of love or perhaps simple flattery in the form of love letters from an admirer. It can appear mocking and sinister when faced with a difficult writing assignment in college. And, it can bring mystery in the form of an envelope without a return address. Paper can still bring happiness to an adult as it did in youth, only in a less naive way. It can bring news of a promotion or a letter from a childhood friend. It can also bring security in its most pursued form: money.

As we age, we seem to forget some of the more carefree, enjoyable characteristics of paper. We seem especially serious about paper in our elder years. We guard old pictures, for they are the memories of youth and innocence. We somberly write wills, and purchase life insurance policies. We cherish greeting cards from family and friends, since we don't seem to be able to see them as often as we used to.

Paper ages just as we do. It is born pure and innocent like a newborn

baby. It is then invaded and molded by its environment. It is shuffled from place to place as most of us are during our hectic lives. In the end it is frail like old bones, worn thin from use. It becomes discolored, browned like liver spots on old, fragile hands. It curls forward from the corners like the hunch of an old person's back, weary and tired. Finally, paper and person disintegrate like death. Or worse, we are tossed into a trash can ironically called a "home" to wait for death, forgotten by those who were once so fond of us, proud of us, amused by us.

I'll Call You

Those three words seemed such a pledge; a powerful gear, binding me forever. I nearly clapped my hand over my mouth in horror after I heard myself utter them. This was terrible; I was committed to this woman, and I wanted to be free desperately. The morning light pierced me like the cruel, sharp thorns of a wounded heart. I thought over half a dozen panic-inspired scenarios that would pull me, protesting mightily, from my home at a tornado pace, never giving me a chance to call her. None of them stood up under even my own cross-examination, so I knew that she would rip each one to threads, in turn. I tossed fitfully in bed, sleeping in as usual, trying to find an answer to my dilemma and ultimately turning my face to the wall in defeat. I would have to call.

We'd gone out the previous night, our respective friends—who happened to know each other (how convenient)—having set the whole thing up for us. We had a great time dancing—she knows how to twist, incredibly enough—dining, and whining about our horrible rotten luck with the opposite sex in general. Her favorite story was about the boyfriend she had for nearly a year and a half, whose musical tastes refused to expand past Guns 'N Roses. She said his favorite song, which he always belted out in his car, was “I Used to Love Her But I Had to Kill Her.” I had nodded sagely at this point, wondering what the heck such a pretty girl was doing with a loser like that. I then launched into a poignant narrative concerning the sweet Catholic girl I'd been seeing, who turned out to be two months pregnant, with a black ex-boyfriend who didn't like me. I couldn't tell if she was laughing or crying; I couldn't tell if I was. Anyway, you get the picture.

I would almost be inclined to say the evening went well, except that we didn't talk at all on the way to her house, and I kept getting this feeling that she wanted to say something, or she wanted me to say something, but I didn't know what.

We pulled into her driveway, and I discreetly pulled the tranny into first gear, old habit, in case a quick getaway was required. Otherwise, if I'd slammed on the gas, the transmission would have taken another full second to shift down and begin to pull away. That old habit saved my life (or at

least my natural good looks) once.

With the brake safely keeping my escape rocket in check, I turned to face her and found that she was already watching me. My heart raced, nerves tingled, et cetera, for no reason at all.

She said, "I really had a great time this evening. It's been such a long time since I've enjoyed myself as much as I did tonight."

I answered in kind, honestly enough, even though at this point my mind was racing forward and back, trying to guess what would come next.

We sat in silence for a moment, until the feeling in that old car was beginning to strain. She finally shifted in her seat and with a quick glance at her neon Swatch said she had to get inside. Before she got out, she leaned over, brushed my lips with hers, saying, "Maybe we could do this again sometime."

"Maybe," I agreed, though by now all the alarms were going off in my head, and all I truly felt was a most compelling urge to leave before I said anything foolish.

She popped the door on my old Comet, walked around the front, and disappeared through the shrubs toward the house. It was then that I committed my fatal blunder, my banzai-suicide, my Uzi-roulette moral stumble.

Over the throaty grumble of my J.C. Whitney special dual exhausts in the summer night, I shouted, "Jeni—I'll call you!"

From the open porch window, her voice carried back to me: "You will? Great! I'll be waiting."

Somehow, even though I should have been incensed with my own stupidity, her response made me feel wonderful. So just for the wild, hairy hell of it, after easing out of the gravel driveway, I hammered down the throttle to burn another two hundred miles' worth of tread off the tired Dunlops on the back of my Caliente. That exuberance lasted me almost halfway home (she said she'd be waiting!), until I really remembered what I had said—"I'll call you?" Oh, great move, Slick!

I mentally battered myself the rest of the way home, the rest of the night, and on into morning. I couldn't erase the ominous feeling surrounding the memory of my deed (or misdeed, if you will).

Finally, I stumbled from my bunk for a cup of coffee, thumbing unenthusiastically through the new issue of *Hot Rod* with my free hand. If I could only think of some way to avoid calling Jeni back. It wasn't that I wasn't attracted to her, or some goofy thing like that. Last night was great. It was just that once I called back she'd want to go out again, and again;

she'd be jealous if I decided to go out with anyone else; she'd want to walk around the halls at school holding hands. I couldn't explain, even to myself, why this sometimes tempting prospect disagreed with me so much. I just instinctively knew that I did not want that at all. On exactly the same wavelength, I knew that if I did call back, I'd be hooked. That would be it. I'd be reeled in just like so many trophy malefish before me. I vowed to myself that this would not be so.

Having decided to be the craftiest, hardest-to-catch malefish in female angling history, my entire day (Saturday) was overcast with moody spells in which I could do nothing but attempt to find some sneaky, underhanded, devious way to get out of making any additional promises to that girl. I gave up completely twice, had the phone in my hands (my great buddy Bob had already provided me with her number through the mutual friend. Thanks, Bob.) But I lost my nerve.

After moping around the house all day, unnerving my parents, who were unused to seeing me at all until dark on a Saturday, and finding no other course of action in sight, I sat by the phone. I was resigned then to meet my touch-tone-delivered fate manfully. I eyed the thing askance, as might a condemned prisoner regard the blade of his executioner's axe. I rehearsed a couple of lines that I hoped would perhaps lessen the damage, and took several deep breaths in an attempt to control the quiverings of my viola-taut nerves, looking at the phone all the while as if trying to stare the machine down. When it rang, I jumped nearly three feet and came hazardingly close to choking up my left kidney.

A garbled "Hello" made its way from my spasming larynx into the receiver.

"Hey man, did you call her yet?" It was Bob. Beautiful.

"Call who?" I feigned disinterested ignorance.

"You know, Jeni." Large emphasis on her name. My entire chest cavity did an intricate gymnastic exercise.

"No, man, but I was just starting to think about it," I began, trying to remain unconcerned-sounding.

"Well, don't, dude. Her old man was furious with how you yelled back at the house and smoked your tires for her, at one in the morning. She says he'll shoot you if he hears your car again."

"Whoa." I was not at all sure what to say now.

"Yeah. And she says her dad even likes the stoner dude better than he likes you, so she has per-uh, permission to see him again," reported my loyal friend, only stumbling once over the difficult three-syllable word. All

of a sudden, though, the rest of his sentence made sense to me.

"You mean the only reason we were going out last night was that she couldn't see her boyfriend?"

"Yup-per, bwana."

"What?"

"Uhm, yes."

"And you set me up to go out with her, knowing this?"

"Well, y'know..." Sounds like a yes to me, Bob.

"Thanks a lot, good buddy!" I shouted into the phone, startling Mom and Dad back into their room. "What if some kind of news gets back to her boyfriend, bonehead? I really don't want any trouble with a reefer addict and his forty-five cousins."

"Don't be so hard on him, dude. They say he's almost kicked the marijuana habit—"

"You're not a big help, Bob. I'm going to do your yard for this, you gomer. Just wait for it!" No mercy. Bob was dead meat.

"Hey, wait—"

Slam. As soon as the phone was down, all that anger I'd been throwing at Bob just disappeared. A little grin even tugged at my stubble mug.

I walked out of the house, to give Mom and Dad some peace and quiet, and also to tune up my car (again). For the next several hours I immersed myself in familiar, greasy environs, whistling a much-mangled tune. I enjoyed every minute of not having to worry about what to tell Jeni, but I have to admit that I kind of feel like I missed out on something with her. As I tightened the last few bolts on my chromed-out valve covers, I wondered if she felt the same way as she and the stoner rolled down the road listening to Guns N' Roses.

The Laughter of Shadows

Another night has ended and I still live. From the window I can see the amber rays of sunlight chasing away the last of the darkness, but there is no comfort in that; none at all.

I will survive.

As I sit here and put pen to paper, it has been nine days since my arrival at this wretched place: Nine days! Perhaps a lesser man might not have fared so well. I am almost sure of it.

There is food here, and drink, and I am warm and dry. There is cordwood and a fireplace, and the cellar is filled with more dried logs to be burned. I have every convenience that a man could want.

I have begun to fear for my sanity.

Madness.... Insanity. Nothing in this perfect little cottage is what it appears to be. It is all too perfect, so neatly organized. From the light of my lamp, the flame conjures up the shadows that play and dance on the walls. Laughing, whispering in their shadow-talk that only they understand. I tell myself that they are only illusions and can do me no harm.

The house seems to be alive. I can sometimes hear it breathing laboriously as if it wanted to pull itself free from the foundation and walk away.

Ah, but that is madness indeed. Houses have no personalities, no consciousness or intelligence. They are wood and stone, nothing more.

But I cannot shake the feeling I have that this house is evil. It is a bad place.

I do not believe in the supernatural.

There are no ghosts, no haunted houses. That is the stuff of made-up tales to frighten little children, and I am a grown man. I am intelligent, logical, reasonable.

Then why am I afraid to close my eyes and go to sleep if there is nothing to be afraid of?

I have not slept in nine days, and that is the reason for all of this. I am fatigued, close to the edge. If I close my eyes then the darkness will be absolute; in the darkness there are...things...things that are not so easily laughed away when the dark swallows the sun.

So I write these words. I must stay awake, and if I put these reasonable things down I can keep some of my sanity. If I ever leave this place (and I must harbor a small hope that I will), I will leave this pile of notes on the table and pray that no one will ever read them.

I first came across this place after having traveled the last five miles or so on foot amidst the most terrible storm. I knew then that I must find shelter or perish; the countryside was covered with snow; perhaps the worst blizzard I had ever seen in my 37 years. The wind bit greedily against my body seeking for exposed flesh. As I made my way, almost ready to give up and let the elements have their way with me, I saw a single shade yonder, and I felt my strength return anew. I had found shelter at last!

It stood there: two stories high and beckoning me to come forth. One window was cracked and the shutter banged against it noisily, but there were no lights. I bounded up the stairs and began to hammer furiously upon the door but no reply came.

Again and again I knocked but to no avail. With half frozen hands I twisted the knob, and the door swung open easily on its hinges. I shut the door tightly as I walked inside.

I called out, and again there was no answer so I dug for my matches to provide some illumination, and in the flickering glow I could glimpse the chamber's interior.

There was nothing astonishing about this place. It was similar to many of the midwestern homes that I had seen before. A battered oil lamp hung on a wooden peg, and I took it from the wall and brought it to life.

With this source being brighter than my match, I continued on my journey still calling out in order not to be mistaken for a thief or vandal, but the house remained silent. I was sure the house was empty by now and then began to inspect the rest of the place.

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The furnishings for the most part were very modest. Simple but sturdy enough for any family. The living area consisted of a table and a half dozen straight-back chairs, a desk complete with the writing utensils that I now possess, a sofa, and against the farthest wall, a grand fireplace.

Instinctively, this was the first place I went to. Scattered about lay a few lengths of stove wood and a pile of kindling chips along with a tin of long matches. In no time at all I had a fine blaze going and had to fight off the urge to sit there and let the warmth rush over me. The fire was wonderful, but I knew that unless I found more fuel it would not last.

It did not take much deduction to locate the cellar. It sat in the middle

of the kitchen, and when I pulled upon the iron ring there was no resistance: it simply groaned on rusted hinges. I held the lantern steadily and descended the stairs.

I began to poke about, the light invading the darkness with little mercy, and could hear small scurrying sounds from the corners. Rats, of course, and large ones by the sound of it.

The huge cavernlike room held a dark, musty smell that resembled spoiled fungi, and huge silken cobwebs hung from the corners (some of these were so large I had to wonder what sort of arachnid had so craftily spun them). The rats still ran about, and the sound was a little unnerving.

It took only a few minutes for me to find the cache of wood. It was stacked neatly against one wall, and I began to gather up an armload then began to climb the stairs again. The noise grew louder and seemed to be coming from all directions. I suddenly did not want to be down here and hastened myself, leaving the cellar behind.

With this task completed I settled into the largest chair and drank up the fire's warmth. My clothes had begun to dry and I closed my eyes in relief that I was safe from the raging storm outside.

I could not say for sure how long I sat there half-asleep. I may have actually succumbed to the desire but have no recollection of doing so. The only thing I was truly aware of was the feeling of a presence (for lack of a better word) in the room and my eyes snapped open. My sleep-blurred eyes scanned the room and there she stood.

The first thing that entered my mind was that she had been unfortunate enough to have been out in the storm and had sought shelter, but upon further inspection this proved to be in correct.

The woman wore only a transparent nightgown, a wisp of a garment that only a fool would have dared to venture out in the cold with. Perhaps she had been upstairs, sleeping in one of the bed chambers. Was she the lady of this manor?

She was beautiful, striking, in fact. Her long black hair hung past her shoulders to the middle of her back and her eyes were a delicate shade of brown. Her skin was flawless, if void of color, but her lips were full and succulent. She moved liquidly to the fireplace and I rose from the chair.

"Hello," I called to her. "Are you the lady of this place?"

The woman did not turn to face me, only kept herself in front of the fire. After she did not answer, I moved closer and put my hand lightly against her shoulder.

Just as my hand settled upon her skin, her head fell to the floor with a

horrible thump.

It was then that I screamed.

The neckline of her gown was stained with blood; some of it had already dried in horrible rust-colored patches but the majority of it was still red and wet. Her neck was a ragged stump and the fallen skull looked up at me with dead eyes, her mouth frozen in a permanent scream of agony.

I turned to run but was tangled in my own feet. I lay there on the floor helpless as I watched the corpse move slowly across the room and pick up the fallen extremity when a terrible pounding sound filled the room, so loud that it shook the walls and small chunks of plaster fell from overhead. It was a dreadful sound and I prayed that it would cease, but no God heard my prayers.

It was then that the shade-woman simply melted away. It was as if she was never there at all and shortly after that the pounding began to grow softer. Finally there was a single crash, followed by a high-pitched scream that I assumed belonged to the apparition, and then silence.

I got to my feet, shaking but convinced that everything I had just witnessed had been nothing more than a weird sort of hallucination. I would have believed it except for the bloody nightgown hanging from one of the wooden pegs on the wall.

I reached out, not wanting to touch it, yet needing to confirm its actuality, and for a brief moment it was solid; then it too disappeared like a wisp of smoke. I looked down at my fingers, and although the nightgown had vanished, my fingers were damp with blood.

I knew what was to be done, although my brain wished for another, saner, alternative. If there were others in the house with me I must find them; and if my eyes had not revolted against my mind, there had been a terrible act of violence, and, unexplainable as it was, I must find the culprit and body and do something about it.

I searched the room for some sort of weapon. I had a small skinning knife of my own but it was a poor weapon against any foe other than small animals. My eyes found the poker after a few minutes and I gripped it tightly. This wasn't much better than my knife but would have to do. It was a piece of iron two feet long and slightly curved at one end. If the murderer had a better weapon (and he most undoubtedly did), my plan was to disarm him as quickly and efficiently as possible. I gathered up every ounce of my courage and went upstairs, a fireplace iron in one hand and burning lamp in the other.

The entire second floor was dark and empty; there was no sign that

anyone had been there for a long period of time. Half of the second floor consisted of the master bedroom and three smaller ones. Each of these were eerily similar in furnishings: all had a bed and small table except for the master, which also had a desk and full-length mirror. Each room had a closet, and each was empty save for a layer of dust and several small spiders that were content to weave their webs.

The second half of the upstairs was made up of a sewing room in which a spinning wheel sat silently but looked to be in good condition, and three other rooms that were barren. I could not even venture a guess as to what purpose these rooms were used for and I left the top floor disgruntled. There was only the one flight of stairs, and no one had ascended them, for I would have seen them do so.

After leaving the upstairs, I decided to inspect the remainder of the house. Besides the entrance foyer and living room, there was a kitchen and a storage pantry connected by a swinging door.

Both the huge kitchen and pantry were spotless and the shelves supplied with generous amounts of food and my stomach rumbled. After what I had just witnessed, I could not bring myself to eat, so I looked at the cellar door which was closed.

I did not want to go down there, not into the darkness, so I turned right through an archway and walked into an immense library.

Long shelves lined three walls and were filled with volumes of books, most bearing no titles. There was a huge chair and table only a few feet from where I stood; there rested an open book and I picked it up and looked at what was written therein.

It was a journal of sorts; however, the penmanship was so poor that any attempt at trying to decipher its contents would prove to be in vain. The paper was old and molding with age. I placed it back on the table and continued my inspection.

Upon further inspection the other books seemed to have supernatural themes to them: Stoker's *Dracula*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, among others. I returned them to their proper place and went back to the kitchen and fixed myself a satisfying meal of red potatoes and roast beef.

After dinner and a pipe I washed the dishes and began to feel much better. The house was empty except for myself and a few rodents and spiders. The spectral woman had only been a mirage of some sort and I cursed myself as a fool for having believed otherwise. Tomorrow perhaps, the storm would have lessened and I could resume my journey.

I again ascended the steps and made my way to the master bedroom,

stripped out of my clothes and turned down the lamp and curled up for a night's rest. My eyes were closed before I even touched the pillow.

I remember being in the cellar, or what appeared to be the cellar. I remember it all too clearly for it to have been a nightmare. Then there is the other thing that I witnessed, the most terrible thing.

The woman was down there, with a companion this time. I could see no sign of any injury on her person, and I saw that the man she was with was handsome. He was tall and slender, his blonde hair somewhat long. His back, chest, and arms were heavily muscled and I could see his lips move, though the words he spoke were unheard.

I watched as she shed her nightgown and the two fell upon each other, naked and animalistic in their passion for each other. Their bodies were tangled together, and I felt shame and perversion was over me as I watched them, yet I could not leave, nor could I turn away.

The woman's eyes suddenly widened, and raw fear ran into her eyes as she began to climb off of her friend when the pounding noises I had heard earlier came again.

"WHORE!" A voice screamed loud as thunder, and I cringed because it was my voice I had heard. It was the way I would have sounded had I spoken in such anger although my lips hadn't moved.

"ADULTERESS! 'KEEP THEE FROM THE EVIL WOMAN, FROM THE FLATTERY OF THE TONGUE OF A STRANGE WOMAN. LUST NOT AFTER HER BEAUTY IN THINE HEART; NEITHER LET HER TAKE THEE WITH HER EYELIDS. FOR BY MEANS OF A WHORISH WOMAN A MAN IS BROUGHT TO A PIECE OF BREAD, AND THE ADULTERESS WILL HUNT FOR THE PRECIOUS LIFE....' "

Now both of them, the woman and her man-friend, began to climb to their feet. The woman managed to slip into her gown, and the man had one leg in his trousers.

" 'HE WHOEVER GOETH TO HIS NEIGHBOR'S WIFE, WHOEVER TOUCHETH HER SHALL NOT BE INNOCENT.' "

The noise seemed to be coming closer and I felt clammy sweat run across my back and I wanted to run. Still, I stood there mesmerized by the voice that was so eerily similar to mine.

" 'BUT WHOSO COMMITTETH ADULTERY WITH A WOMAN LACKETH UNDERSTANDING: HE WHO DOETH DESTROYETH HIS OWN SOUL. FOR JEALOUSY IS THE RAGE OF MAN: THEREFORE HE SHALL NOT SPARE IN THE DAY OF VENGEANCE.' "

Before my eyes, just as the voice finished its quotation, a dull flash of metal split the air and whistled past me, and the woman's head departed her body.

A gusher of blood stained the ground as the two pieces of the girl thumped to the floor. The fellow who had been trying to get dressed became entangled in his own pants and he, too, fell.

His eyes widened and threatened to burst from the sockets. The man held up his hands, begging for mercy when the whistling sound came again, and I saw the object clearly this time, a long-bladed calvary saber, as it split the upturned hands and buried itself into the handsome man's face.

The blade was pulled free from the still man and brought down again and again. I cannot tell you how many times it rose and fell, but in the end the ruined corpse did not resemble anything human. The thudding noises suddenly ceased and I stood there staring at the atrocities in front of me.

I came awake with a start, shaking and covered with sweat. I untangled myself from the blankets and lit the lamp on the table, planning on getting a glass of water from the pump downstairs, but when my feet hit the floor I knew there was something wrong. I could feel something sticky against my thighs and after a brief inspection I cried out.

My naked body was covered in crimson. Dark rivers of blood were streaked against my skin, and lying only an inch from my hand was a very sharp, bloodstained calvary saber.

I lit all the lamps in the house, going from floor to floor and went back into the living room and restoked the fireplace. I drew water from the hand pump, set it on the stove to warm, and it was then I knew I must leave this accursed place, storm or not.

I cleansed myself then dumped the soiled water down the basin then rushed up the stairs and gathered up my clothes then dressed. I left the lamps burning where they were; all I wanted was to leave. I turned the latch of the door and looked outside: at the utter blackness of it all.

Perhaps that is not a very good description; it doesn't really give anyone the correct impression of what it was like. Maybe nothingness is a better word. The storm was gone, but so was everything else. There was no moon or stars shining in the sky, no outline of the countryside, no path leading to the steps, nothing. It was as if the house was simply floating about in some strange void.

I did not go out there, in the blackness.

I went from room to room, checking all the windows, but everywhere I went there was only the same sight as what was in front of the main

doorway, and I began to scream. I screamed and screamed, and my screams echoed back to me as if in answer. I picked up a small length of stove wood and went back to the front door. After a few minutes looking at the nothingness, I let it drop and waited for the sound of it hitting solid ground. The darkness swallowed the wood up, and no sound ever came.

It is still falling, as far as I can tell.

In the darkness there were two glowing pinpoints of light, tiny flashes of red that seemed to glow in the very depths. They looked very much like eyes, and I thought I heard low, mocking laughter. The laughter of shadows.

I closed the door tightly and went back into the living room where there was the fire and light. Where I was safe.

My hand is cramped and my eyes have started to burn from having written all of this, but my tale is almost told. There is little else to write. My time here has been a living hell, for each night I am plagued by the spectres of the woman and her lover, the horrible thundering sounds, and the scurrying noises that seem to be making their way up from the cellar.

I am afraid to go down there, and my supply of wood is almost gone. I have been using the furniture, and already two of the smaller beds are gone. You see, the sword is very sharp.

Perhaps I am mad after all.

I spend my days writing this, and my nights reading what I have written. There is no way out of here, even when the sun is shining.

I opened the door three days ago, you see, and the blackness came back and swallowed the world. I have come to think that the black is a living thing, and it is hungry.

I still survive.

There are no ghosts, no haunted houses, no demons; there is only darkness...and the laughter of shadows.

Connie Szawara



Drinking Coffee

Come in, have a seat, and relax. This room is what most people call a kitchen. In my home it is the center of life. The room is as comfortable as a womb. The lighting is bright enough to see well but not bright enough to intrude. The chairs warmly caress one's bottom. Using these chairs is not so much a sitting on as a sitting in, or being held lovingly. The table is made of smooth pecan wood. When the table is first touched, there is an expectation of solidness, but it feels surprisingly sleek and supple. There is almost a feeling of softness.

Here, have a cup of my special coffee. These oily, dark, warm brown beans are ground to perfection by Max. He makes sure each bean is of uniform granularity before pouring the bubbling hot water slowly through. Put your nose into the vapors above the cup. Smells like the rich, dark Hawaiian soil it was grown in, doesn't it? Close your eyes and drift with the spicy aroma of the islands. Imagine the warm tropical soil, the clear turquoise water, and the sounds of birds calling. Wonderful, isn't it? Slowly savor the pungent flavor. It soothes and satisfies the taste buds. The tongue yearns for more while still savoring the first sip. Caress the flavor leisurely. Let's listen to some music while we enjoy this delicious coffee.

This music is from a tape named "Deep Breakfast." A strange title which is explained in an excerpt from *The Mummery* by Love Anada (The Advaitayana Buddhist Communion): "Evelyn slapped Raymond on the back with a laugh, 'You must be starved, old friend. Come into my apartments, and we'll suffer through a deep breakfast of pure sunlight.' "

My favorite piece on the tape is "The Oh of Pleasure." This sensuous music brings to my mind a picture of a couple in a meadow making love. The kissing, hugging, and stroking are slow at first. Gradually the emotions become more intense, the birds are singing, all nerves are tightening while the music begins to scream pleasantly. All of nature is involved in the feelings of hedonism. Even the velvet cushion of grass and clover, crushed by the writhing couple, is rejoicing. As the music builds to a climax, all of nature joins in song. The aftermath of this pleasure is the tranquil, heavenly, and unearthly music no instrument is capable of making. Reluctantly I return to reality. After listening to this performance, I need to feel something warm and soft.

Here Kitty, Kitty! My cat can be a pest and somewhat demanding of attention, but he always responds. Feel his fur. It is as fine and delicate as angel hair. His look of ecstasy and contentment when petted is a delight. All this dumb animal wants in life is crunchy food, cool water, and petting by a firm hand. He is as large as some dogs, stupider than most living things, and very appreciative of any attention. His purr is subdued. It is reserved for the person who is closest and is providing the stimulation of caressing his body. He especially likes the area behind his ears to be massaged firmly. Look at his eyes. He squints and seems to be looking into a special place of glory. He almost swooning with pleasure. At times he will pet me in return. We take turns petting each other. He will pet me on the arm with his soft paw, or rub me with his head. He does shed some, and a filament of his angel hair may tickle my nose occasionally. You are welcome to hold him. In fact, he will feel somewhat neglected if you don't.

Drinking coffee, listening to good music, and stroking the cat are such pleasures that I can't be bothered with earthly things like housekeeping. I know that there are dishes stacked in the sink haphazardly, the floor has cat hair on it, and the table could stand clearing. Try not to be distracted by the clutter; instead rest your eyes on the wall photos. These are several taken by Max and me. The one on the left was taken at Indiana Dunes State Park. We were hiking on Trail Number Two when a fawn suddenly appeared ahead of us. We whispered and prepared our camera. Max was in front and took a couple of frames. The fawn seemed quite unaware of us and continued to stroll along, grazing occasionally. The fawn was a warm brown with soft patches of white on its back and shoulders. The spindly legs seemed barely adequate. After looking curiously at us with those big brown eyes, the fawn ambled off into the woods. A few yards later I spotted a doe with another fawn. As with the first fawn, this one still had spots. It seemed to me to be a little late in the year for a fawn to have spots. I was excited and in awe of the situation. The innocence of the fawn and the wariness of the mother was something I wanted to capture on film.

Somehow I managed to get my telephoto lens screwed on. My fingers were most uncooperative, and I was trembling. That doe was sure to spook and run away at any second. I took a picture just in the nick of time. Off she went with her fawn. I imagine the other fawn was hers too. That picture does capture the wariness of the doe, and her protective stance between me and her fawn. The brown and muted green of the woods lends a false serenity to the scene. The presence of humans in the woods is a danger to all that depend upon nature for survival. I could just as well have

been a hunter. This photograph is a look at nature I am proud to have captured. Enough of this show and tell.

Have I bored you? Please excuse me while I dig into this clutter a little. I have to at least keep a path through each room. Don't hurry, sit a while longer and enjoy the ambience of coffee and music.

The Palace

Most teenagers have a favorite hangout. Their hangout might be a restaurant, a pool hall, a park, or even an empty parking lot, but their hangouts all have one thing in common. Their hangout is a place where they can meet with friends, a place where they feel wanted, a place where they belong. During the 1960s, when I was a teenager, the Temptations sang about their hangout in Detroit, Michigan, "The Psychedelic Shack"; Arlo Guthrie told about his hangout in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, "Alice's Restaurant"; but my favorite hangout was in San Diego, California. My hangout was The Palace.

When seen in the light of day, The Palace could only be described as unimpressive. It was just an old, run-down, cement block warehouse which sat in the middle of a dusty, weed-choked, litter-strewn field. Weeds grew high along the sides and back of the building, and there was a small, pot-hole-infested, gravel parking lot in front. A cheap, plywood façade, which had been painted with blacks and grays to resemble a stone wall with parapets and towers, was attached to the front of the building. There was a large arched opening in the center of the façade with a plywood ramp leading to it. The owners had obviously intended that the building would look like a medieval castle, complete with drawbridge, but the place more closely resembled a county fair sideshow trailer with a thyroid condition.

The interior was no more impressive than the exterior. After walking across the drawbridge and through the castle gates, patrons paid a 75-cent cover charge at a podium placed to the right of the entrance, then entered what closely resembled a junior high school gymnasium. To the immediate left of the entrance was a short hallway where the restrooms and office were situated. Leading straight ahead from the entrance was a wide entryway about 20 feet long with a refreshment counter parallel to the right-hand wall. The only refreshments were potato chips and soft drinks at exorbitant prices. At the end of the entryway was a dance floor which was slightly larger than a basketball court. There were about a dozen tables with chairs lined up along the near edge of the dance floor, and to the left and right of the entry way, bleachers extended back and up over the restrooms and over the storage area for the snack counter. Above the bleachers were small

officelike boxes with large windows facing the dance floor. These boxes were similar to the sportscasters' booths at a large stadium. At the far right end of the dance floor was a small bandstand for those rare occasions when The Palace had a live band rather than a disc jockey. The only decorations were peace signs and slogans, such as "Make Love Not War" and "Flowers Not Bullets," which were painted on the walls with fluorescent paints.

Having seen this building in the harsh reality of daylight, one could reasonably be expected to ask what the great attraction was. But with the changing of the season, an ugly worm can be magically transformed into a beautiful butterfly, and with the setting of the sun, this dingy warehouse was metamorphosed into the magical fantasy land known as The Palace. When Woodies (vintage, wood paneled station wagons which were usually filled with exuberant teenagers and surfboards), chopped Chevys, chopped Harleys, and milling crowds of smiling, friendly, young people filled the parking lot and the adjacent field, and the sound of Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jefferson Airplane, Jimi Hendrix, or Cream blared from the speakers on the front of the building, the atmosphere was charged with a carnival spirit. This spirit was The Palace.

It was never really clear if the party was inside or outside. Outside was "rap" with friends, drink a beer, smoke a joint, and/or sometimes make love. Inside was dancing. But the real attraction was the psychedelic light show. Projectors inside the windowed booths above the bleachers cast pulsating, gelatinous, varicolored lights onto the walls of the dance floor; these fantastically weird lights seemed to dance to the music. Projectors in the ceiling cast old silent movies onto the dance floor, so that small pieces of the movies could be seen flickering across the hands, arms, faces, and bodies of the dancers. Strobe lights flashed in synchronization with the musical beat, so the spectators and workers seemed to move jerkily in step with the dancers; even the billowing, bluish-gray cigarette smoke appeared to gyrate with the rhythm of the drums. Ultraviolet lights shone on everything, causing the fluorescent slogans and paintings to seem to come to life. Many of the girls painted flowers, hearts, peace signs, or stars on their faces, thighs, or breasts; the black lights subtly but very seductively accentuated these features. The lights, colors, and music seemed to blend together as one; they then either absorbed, or were absorbed by, the crowd until all were as one—our hearts and minds beating with the rhythm of the music—involved in a symbiosis which is as old as time.

I believe teenagers have been basically the same since the first caveboy and first cavegirl held hands in the flickering firelight and swayed with their

friends to the rhythm of village drums, contemplating the weaving, flickering shadows on the walls of their favorite cave while they complained about the older generation, which in turn complained about them. Just as the flappers of the Roaring Twenties have been left behind, hippies and lightshows are also things of the past; but whenever I remember Jimi Hendrix, ironed waist-length hair, knee-high moccasins, and a certain blond-haired California girl with a big floppy hat and a paisley daisy painted on her left breast, I find myself being a little more tolerant of the atrocious music and clothing my teenage daughters seem to love.

Michael Gowin

A New Age

A poem in three parts
With thanks to T.S. Eliot

*"I want to be rich
I want to be thin"*

-An American's lofty goals

Sowing

A land obsessed with ItSelf:
They were the hollow men
of a new age.

Things upon Things
Would not satisfy:
 "More! More!" rose the joyful chorus
 from manicured neighborhoods green
 from the shiny glass and steel monuments,
Erected to the gods
of the new age.

*The spirit of Poverty
hides in the shadow of the valley
of Affluence*

Face from Face
Turning:
sidelong glances cast;
They were safe in that
estranged land—
 looks never kill
 where eyes never meet.
"Thanks be to the gods
of the new age!"

*The spirit of Loneliness
dwells in the shadow of the Valley
of Friendship.*

Hand in Hand

They walked:

“Hopelessness our companion;
such is our choice, this is our will
as we worship the gods
of the new age.”

*The spirit of Despair
thrives in the shadow of the Valley
of Life.*

Reaping

Ours is the land obsessed with itSelf—

We are the hollow men
of a new age:

Our tired eyes...so tired:

wakeful nights granting
no peace to the restless:

Our vacant hearts yearning

for light, for life, for love—
clinging to shadows—
never embracing realities;

Our shallow souls, parched tongues,
thirsting for forgiveness.

What will fill the void?

Pascal knows—

Who will listen?

Ever hearing but choosing not to listen.

“There are many paths.”

(Truth matters not in this land.)

The Conclusion of the Matter

From these hollow men
of the new age
obsessed with themSelves—

Nervous smiles, quivering lips,
a desperate cry rushes forth—

“Welcome Emptiness!
Welcome Isolation!
You will warm us in the
Dark hours...

...won't you?

—and darkness slips down like a curtain,
then
silence.

Connie Szawara



Vietnam 101

The sun was just a crescent, half of it still behind the jungle at our backs, as we started out across the deep blue water. The reflected sunlight on the sea looked like someone had sprinkled gold sequins across the ocean. The sun wasn't even up yet, and it was 75 degrees and going up fast. I could already feel the sun burning on my back. Behind us, I could see steam rising from the jungle. Ninety-eight percent relative humidity, and in two hours it would be 110 degrees, and we were on patrol. It was 1965, and things were just starting to hop.

We were waiting for our new river patrol boats to arrive, so in the meantime, we were patrolling in anything we could borrow: utility boats, World War II landing craft, even powered whaleboats. On this June morning, I had gotten to the boat yard well before dawn so I could get first pick of the boats we could borrow. I went into the yard office and found the chief in charge sleeping on a cot in a corner of the office. I woke him and asked for something that would make better than five knots. "What for?" he replied, "If you can't catch 'em, you can't get in trouble."

I finally conned him out of a 45-foot, twin-engine utility boat that would make about 20 knots. I took the boat to the fuel dock to fuel it up and pick up the rest of the crew. Among the crew was a South Vietnamese ensign who was our interpreter. This son of a bitch was a real piece of work. Although he kind of spoke English, he never talked to anyone in the crew. It seemed he had no regard for anyone, not even his own people. The only time I'd seen him smile had been in response to someone else's distress. No one in the crew liked him. One of our utility men, Romeo, and I were working hard to learn the language so we could unload this fucker.

We'd been patrolling for 60 or 70 days without incident, except for some disconcerting small arms fire that seldom even hit the boat. After two months of us stopping them and digging through their shit looking for weapons, the locals were getting tired of it, and I could see their point. We were fucking with their livelihood.

Barely out to sea, we spotted a 30-foot fishing boat. Our translator, the ensign, grabbed the bullhorn and ordered them to heave to. They turned into the wind and shut down their engine. As we came alongside to check

them out, I could smell broiling fish mixed with the sea air. An old Mama San was cooking breakfast over a fire built on some bricks on the deck. A young woman helped her. A young man going about his business was forward of the deck house. In the bamboo deckhouse, two small children were still sleeping. The old man running the show made it clear that he didn't want to be detained. I could understand enough to figure out that he was telling the ensign that if he didn't get to his nets someone else would; he'd not only be out his fish, but his nets as well. He was shouting and waving his skinny arms around in a show of frustration. The South Vietnamese ensign didn't give a shit about any of the Papa San's problems.

The old man turned from the ensign and wrapped the pull cord around the flywheel to start their motor, so they could be on their way. What happened next seemed like it was in slow motion—something combat troops call “time out.” The ensign grabbed my pump shotgun from next to the wheel where I'd put it. Point blank, he blew Papa San's brains all over the South China Sea. The old man seemed to hang there, still on his feet as the whole side of his head opposite the muzzle was scattered over about 50 square yards of ocean. I screamed at the ensign, “What the fuck are you doing?” He just shrugged. The old man crumpled into the bottom of the boat. The sound of the shotgun blast in the morning silence woke the kids, who started wailing in Vietnamese. The two women, wailing themselves, sagged into each other's arms. The young man in the bow just stood there looking bewildered. The rest of our crew couldn't find a thing to say. It was just too stupid. We'd found a few weapons and war supplies on the rivers, but we'd never found anything at sea. I thought, “We sure saved old Papa San from communism.” We took the fishing boat in tow and dropped it and our South Vietnamese ensign off at the Vietnamese naval station and never heard another thing about it.

I had volunteered for this shit. My first Navy tour in Vietnam started off boring and uncomfortable in August of '64, three or four months at a whack doing radar patrol, watching for Soviet or Chinese ships on a tin can that was older than I was. We'd patrol a stretch of ocean in the 120 degrees-plus heat, never seeing land or another ship, except to refuel and resupply. Since there was never enough fresh water for bathing, it was saltwater showers or stink. I worked in the after-engine room where temperatures routinely topped 160 degrees. It was just as bad for the guys in deck crew. They worked in the unmerciful sun. None of the enlisted spaces were air conditioned, so none of us ever got a break from the heat. The first thing that comes to mind when I think of my short time on that old

can is HEAT, always heat. I put in for a transfer to anywhere before the end of the first patrol, hoping in my 18-year-old optimism that I'd get duty somewhere cooler. About that time, someone at Fleet Control found out that our ship was qualified for both day and night shore bombardment. It stayed hot, but it sure wasn't boring. I can clearly remember the first cruise up the Mekong.

We'd gotten orders to go in for H&I ("harassment and interdiction") fire that coming night. I'd never seen a river of the Mekong's magnitude—at the mouth I was unable to see the other shore. I knew we were in the river because the water had turned a muddy brown, and it smelled of jungle, not the clean ocean smell I'd become so used to. As we neared the city of Mi Tho, the economics of war started to dawn on me. There were large numbers of freighters anchored in the river. They were from every noncommunist nation in the world. Only one thing could get these civilians to ply these dangerous waters: Money! As I look back, this was probably one of my first spontaneous, truly adult observations.

The morning after that night of H&I fire, I found out just how dangerous these waters could be. As we returned to Mi Tho on the Tien Giang River, we got too close to shore and took a rocket. It hit starboard side, behind the switch board in the engine room where I was standing watch. It didn't do much real damage, but it started a fire in the switch board. We lost electric power immediately. Shortridge, the top watch, was yelling at me, "Get the steam powered pumps on line, so we don't lose main engines!" We'd been running on electric pumps, trying to keep the temperature in the engine room down. Not knowing whether we might get more fire, he wanted both main engines on line, so we could get out of there fast. I was overcome by smoke before I could get the last of the pumps on line. I shouted up to Shortridge, "I'm not going to make it. It's too smoky."

"Keep at it. I'll make sure you get out." His word was good. I learned later that he carried me topside when I passed out. The chief corpsman got me to come around by giving me an injection of atropine sulfate to restore my breathing. My lungs hurt for weeks after. It was fortunate we didn't take any more fire because we were limping along on one engine when I came to.

I learned something that day: a guy could get hurt in this war. I learned something else about war: it's hard-ass work. As we cruised the coasts and rivers of Vietnam, we were either at battle stations shelling, or standing six hours on watch, six hours off, six on, six off, and so on. Somehow we fitted in repairs, cleaning, rearming, resupplying, and refueling. The one thing we

didn't fit in much of was sleep. All of this went on in the ever-present heat. Our perspiration dried instantly, leaving our clothes salt-stiff and foul smelling. Below deck, in my rack, it was so hot and close I could hardly breathe, but I was so exhausted, I'd somehow manage to go to sleep. I would have taken a duty station in hell to get off of that destroyer.

In the "plan of the day" one morning, I read that West Pacific Fleet Vietnam was looking for volunteers to man a group of new river patrol boats. Since I'd gone to military school for six years, I had the small arms experience they asked for, and I'd done my share of boating, growing up near the ocean in Southern California. In my ignorance, it sounded like just the ticket. After all, how dangerous could it be running around on a river in a speedboat? I volunteered.

I can recall thinking, "I'll never get it because everybody would probably volunteer for that 'good duty.'" After I volunteered, a few of the "old salts" hinted that it might not be what I expected. Subtle things like, "Boy, you're going to get your ass shot off," or "Better you than me." I knew they were just jealous because I'd thought of it first. To my great surprise, I got the transfer. They didn't even interview me or anything. My state of ecstasy started to fade a little at jungle warfare training in the Philippines. Again, subtle stuff like the sadistic instructor who told us, "There are 100 species of snakes in the Nam, 99 of which are deadly poison. The other one eats you whole." But I didn't really get concerned until we got to POW school. No one had said anything about getting taken prisoner. This was starting to look like some serious shit. In the POW school, they dumped us off on a small island where the enemy, our troops dressed in Chinese uniforms, chased us down with jeeps. They then lined us up and beat the shit out of us, just to get our attention. The first day and night, we were treated as POWs. After that, it was like any other military school with classes on the different aspects of being a POW.

We got shipped back to Vietnam, but our boats hadn't arrived yet. We were eager to use all the stuff we had learned in the P.I., so we started borrowing boats to patrol in. We patrolled in borrowed boats for three months. Our new river patrol boats came in about three weeks after the incident with poor old Papa San. We stopped patrolling for a while, so we could set up the new boats. These were the much-touted Swift Boats. Slightly over 25 feet long, they looked like an open speedboat with a canvas sunshade. Powered by two supercharged engines, they were "jet driven" (no propellers), highly maneuverable, very fast, and able to run in just a few inches of water. They were heavily armed for their size: a heavy machine

gun, .50 caliber in the bow, and on either side a light M.G. .30 caliber with two devices for launching an 81 mm mortar round (direct fire mortar).

And, of course, we already had our own small arms. We got our small arms from the Marine armory. The sergeant at the door checked us in and we went in and picked out our own weapon. That way if it ever malfunctioned, you could only blame yourself. I'd spent a long time selecting a .45-caliber automatic pistol. I'd finally found a nice new one with close clearance that would shoot nice, straight "tight groups." I picked up my seven shot pump shotgun and was going to leave when I saw this old marine gunny sergeant picking up .45s and shaking them.

"Why you doin' that, gunny?"

"To find one that rattles, a good loose one."

"But it won't shoot tight groups if it's loose."

"If they're close enough you've gotta use a .45, you're not worried about tight groups. You want it to work. The loose ones always feed and don't jam."

I put my nice new .45 back and started shaking .45s. He was right. My old loose .45 never failed to function.

The rest of the crew was also armed out of the marine armory. Jackson, a huge black kid, was from a farm in southern Georgia. He was 6 feet 7 inches, 270 pounds, unbelievably strong, a devout Southern Baptist, and a strict teetotaler. He manned the heavy M.G. in the bow and had an M16 he never used. At the stern was Steel, 5 feet 10 inches, 195 pounds, and all muscle. He came off a ranch in Montana. A crack shot with a rifle, he thought the M16 was junk. Made of plastic, it looked and felt like a Mattell toy; besides, the early models jammed. He used an M14. It looked and felt like a real rifle and shot big heavy bullets that carried well.

The utility men were Pablo Romero and Monticello Austin. The utility men were just that; they did whatever was necessary: man the M.G.'s, fire the mortar, haul ammo, whatever it took. Romero was 6 feet 1 inch, 145 pounds, and leathery looking. We called him Romeo because of his way with the girls. He was a real live cowboy from New Mexico. He was an excellent guitarist, and his country music, both Mexican and American, was a real morale booster. Monticello Austin was the other utility man; he was known as Mohair. He, like me, was short and stocky. Unlike me, he was black. Mohair came from a ghetto in Philly, yet he could speak the clearest, most grammatically correct English I encountered the whole time I was in Nam.

A sometimes crew member was Fernandez, the only NCO besides me

in the group. He was a black Puerto Rican from New York. A first class corpsman, he was the best combat medic I ever saw. He'd been in the Navy a long time and had seen combat in Korea more than a decade before. Last was our skipper, Mr. Sowa, an ROTC ensign from some eastern college, where he'd studied accounting. He, at 22, was barely older than I. He had a baby face and looked kind of soft because he was what you'd call chubby. Because of his accounting expertise, we never had trouble getting what we needed from supply. He could get those difficult requisition forms right the first time out in spite of them being a real bitch.

After four weeks of doing nothing but setting up and testing the new boats, all the crews were eager to get on patrol and see what the boats would do. When we got the word to go patrolling, it was reason it party. That evening, Mr. Sowa came up with six cases of beer. No brand name. The olive-drab cans with military spec numbers just said "Beer." Cranston, a marine who had been in country for a year or so and had been giving us weapons training, got a couple of bottles of 120-proof native rice whiskey that tasted like paint thinner and took the top of your head off. After about an hour of partying, Mohair and I followed Romeo into the bushes (all that beer). Cranston walked up and asked us if we wanted to get high. I said, "I thought we were doing a pretty good job of that." He motioned to Romeo to come over, pulled out this fat joint and lit it. I'd smoked a little of it back home, but nothing like this shit. Vietnamese pot is some of the best in the world. The only thing I remember about the party after that was throwing up. Man, did I get loaded. I was still fucked up when they woke me up at four o'clock the next morning. Fernandez gave me some Dexadrine and had me breathing oxygen as we motored out on our first patrol in our new boat. This was a situation I tried to avoid in the future. We all tried to make sure we had a clear head when we went out. It was just too dangerous not to be hitting on all cylinders.

For the first month, while the boats were still in their shakedown period, we operated with at least one other boat. In case something went wrong, we wanted to have another boat right there to give assistance. Hostile fire was gradually increasing all the time. The V.C. had figured out the boats were going to make life a lot rougher for them. After three weeks of operating with another boat, we were doing search and seizure, looking for arms and supplies northwest of the delta on the Hau Giang River almost in Cambodia. We were taking turns going alongside to check out native boats. Our boat had just checked out a fishing boat, so it was the other boat's turn.

They hailed a 35-foot sampan. Two Vietnamese in "black pajamas" were on deck. Jackson took a long hard look at the sampan.

"Somethin' don't seem right about that boat," indicating the sampan.

"Whatta' ya mean, Jack?"

"I ain't sure. It just ain't right."

The men on the other patrol boat were tying up to the sampan to search her. Suddenly there was a tremendous explosion. We were over 100 meters away and had to duck to avoid flying debris. After the debris and water settled down, there was debris everywhere except right where the boats had been. There was a circle of 75 or 80 meters of clear water in a river strewn with debris. We wanted to fire on something, but there wasn't anything to fire on, just the smoke from the plastic explosive. The sampan, the patrol boat and crew were gone. I got on the radio with the lieutenant back at our base. We were ordered to guard the area until they could get out to assess the damage. I tried to explain that there wasn't anything left to assess, but we had to stay until two more PBs and a divers' boat arrived. We went back to base. We heard later that all they found was the machine gun; everything else had been blown literally to bits.

These were the first casualties our boat group suffered, but not the last. The boats became one of the most hazardous duties in Nam. Personnel attrition was seven out of ten. That explosion wrought a change of attitude that kept our crew out of the statistics. We never lost a man. All of us got wounded, most of us more than once, but we never lost a man. Part of that was due to the "shoot first-find out later" attitude we got watching that patrol boat go up. Part of it came from Jack's sixth sense. That proved to be invaluable in the future.

Gregory Hunter

Looking at a Road Kill

Look, up ahead
There's something in the road.

Why, it looks like
a dead animal.

Get out of the car.
Make sure it's dead.

Out of the car
looking at a clammy blob of guts.

Popped open like
A huge hairy zit.

And the blood
so much blood
slimy and dry and black and sticky.

And the gaping mouth
of the smashed Creation
frozen in its last second of horror and pain.

Asphalt-smeared eyes that look up
"I know you did this"
Not you, but
you as if said with the
broad sweep of an arm through the air

"Oh dear Jesus this is sick!"

But wait.

There's more.

MAGGOTS.

Crawling everywhere
so many that they
can actually be heard.
Writhing in their gluttony
for decay.

Tunneling through, munching upon,
sitting atop,
getting fat from,
resting on
a souvenir
from the Man in Cloak
"I can't bear to watch!"

Get a spine, little man,
God watches this all day long.

Here I'll Stay

I never want to return to my old way of life. Only one short year has gone by since that hot, dusty morning in Parker's fort, yet it seems so long ago, as if it were but a haunting dream. Charging through the open gate like mounted demons came Cuning Wolf and his warriors. Like specters, their faces are painted hideously black, eyes encircled with white, and their cheeks and chins slashed with ochre red. Hair obsidian like the night is streaming behind them, like their mounts' manes. As they rush toward me, their bronzed, naked bodies are muscled and taut, glimmering with sweat. They resemble wild panthers poised and ready to pounce upon their prey. I watch mesmerized, unable to move. Suddenly I feel hands under my arms and I am being lifted in one swoop to the back of one of the wild-eyed war ponies. I am stolen away.

Keemah, "Comes with us"; that's my name now. I am one of the "People," the Peneteka Comanche. I am no longer Cynthia Ann Parker of the Parker clan from Texas.

The early morning air is crisp and fresh. I sit quietly and reflectively upon the rise, watching the dawn and the waking sights and sounds of this place that is now my home. Lifted up to me on a gentle breeze are sounds high-pitched and nasal. It is the sing-song chant of Eagle, our village crier, signaling the beginning and celebration of a new day. This song is a part of each day, one of the many things that bring order to our lives. I have predictably heard it each morning among the "People." I can't imagine a day beginning without it. What a beautiful spot our chief has chosen for our spring camp! As I look at the camp below me, I see profusions of multi-colored, wild flowers upon the slope. Row upon row of cream colored, squatty cones are situated on the canyon floor among towering pines and aspens. A small brook meanders lazily through the center of the camp for the use and enjoyment of all. I see smoke beginning to curl sluggishly upward, through the holes in a few of the lodges. In my mind's eye, I can see the women moving softly about inside, blowing the embers of their sleeping fires to bring them to life. The stirrings of life are evident as a few of the young boys emerge through the oval doorways of their lodges and await their friends to go and take their morning baths. In back of me on the plateau I hear soft nickerings of contentment from some of the ponies,

and the tearing and rhythmic crunching of grass. The smells of roasting meat and coffee waft up to me on the breeze, causing my mouth to water. I also hear the children's laughter and am reminded that I, too, must do my chores. There is wood to be gathered and water to be brought. My mother will be waiting.

As I gather wood, my thoughts travel to another time, another place. Parker's fort was my home for nine years of my life. I try with difficulty to recall the structure of my life then. It is no more now than a faded picture in my mind. I would awake to the smells and sounds of eggs and bacon frying crispy in a skillet. The aroma of fresh coffee seems to fill the small, dark room. There is no time to savor these delicious aromas; time is precious and not to be wasted. I quickly get out of bed and head to the basin to wash up. I pull my scratchy blue homespun over my head. I must hurry to the table; it is time for morning devotions. Six of us sit rigidly upon simple benches around the small, rectangular table. We must not smile, or fidget: this is a serious thing. My father, Elder Issac, sits at the head of the table and unsmilingly admonishes us from God's "Word," to be chaste, hard working, and to live in fear of God. He closes with a lengthy, monotonous prayer. When I'm so hungry I think I'll burst, he says, "Amen." We are at last allowed to eat. We must do this quietly: "Children are to be seen and not heard." We may not leave the table until we are excused. Once excused, it's time for our morning chores. My job is to feed our small flock of chickens and gather their eggs. I step outside, temporarily blinded by the bright sunshine. The heat seems oppressive already and the dryness causes dust to fill the air. As I look to the right, I see the men chatting as they form work teams to go outside the fort and tend the fields. I hear the sounds of wood upon metal and see in front of me Amelia Prat busily preparing the large copper vat to make soap with a gray concoction of fat and lye. To my left, Sam Miller is stooped over a harness, repairing it for use on his large team of work horses.

"Keemah." I hear my name called and I'm brought back to today, reality.

As I head toward our lodge, I cannot stop the thoughts that are coming like a flood now. If the soldiers should find me and force me to return to the fort, there is so much I would miss here. I would miss flying across the miles of beautiful countryside as one with my spotted pony, Storm. I would feel smothered, confined to the four wooden walls of a fort. I would miss the feeling of the warm sun and the coolness of a summer's breeze upon my bare skin as I romp and play only in my leather breechcloth and moccasins.

I never again wish to be subjected to the “ladylike,” scratchy homespun rubbing my skin raw in the summer’s heat, or the rigidity of shoes pinching my feet. Never again do I wish to hear the monotonous, droning voice of an elder reading to me from the “Word.” I’d rather hear old Many Stars tell her animated stories of Old Fox and the trickster.

As evening closes, I lie upon my buffalo robe, sinking into its soft, deep warmth. I gaze through the open smoke hole at the twinkling stars overhead, breathing deeply the smells of earth and smoky smelling leather. I feel so free and so content. I never again want to end my day within the smothering, bleakness of a cabin with only a planked, wooden ceiling over my head and a stiff bed under my back. I am one of “the people.” It is here I choose to stay.

James Norris

Forever Outside

It is a strange thing...
...to watch their faces.
As they watch him...
They sense the wildness
within him. They want to
know him. They want to
touch him. But when they
look into his eyes they see...

The darkness of the forest,
the deepness of the lily
pond...
And it confuses them,
it makes them remain...
always a step away.
Wild things have always
been misunderstood.

And yet, they always
strive to keep wild
things around...
Perhaps as curiosities.
Or perhaps to remind themselves
that beyond the fringes of society
there are things that they
cannot understand...

Yet, in the back of their
minds they know that they
need wild things...
To balance nature...
To contrast their drab existences.
And so it is that they keep

him in their cages...
Cages forged of...

Curiosity and wonder.
Cages forged not of steel.
No, cages forged of...distance.
They keep their distance...
Occasionally working up
the courage to enter the cage
for a brief moment to touch
the beast...

To feel the soul of the forest.
To look into the eyes of the autumn moon.
They touch the beast...
And walk away, each one leaving
him...touched.
Somewhere the wind picks up
And brings him the scent
Of damp leaves...And wildflowers.
He looks out, at their faces,
and he looks beyond their cages.
And he smiles...

Memories

Arriving home one day after a particularly excruciating honest day's work at an R.V. factory, I was greeted at the door of my home with what I think is one of the best aromas in the world if not *the* best aroma. This aroma was that of blackberry cobbler cooking in an oven.

The tangy, sweet, heady aroma began whirling around me as soon as I entered the house. As though with a pair of invisible hands that soothingly caressed my nose and head round about, the aroma seemingly plucked me from my feet and floated me into the kitchen. There I observed Becky, my first love, removing from the oven my second love, a golden brown, steamy, bubbling-hot blackberry cobbler.

Exclamations of joy issued forth from me as Becky enticingly passed the cobbler beneath my nose and placed it upon the counter. They became a groan as she informed me of the dire consequences that I would incur if she caught me sampling the delight before dinner. Pleading innocent submission, I gave Becky an affectionate kiss and quickly bounded away with glee to ready myself for the eagerly anticipated occasion.

After I took a shower, I went into the living room and assumed my most relaxing position, that of flopping on the couch with the evening newspaper. My concentration was soon lost because of the aroma still wafting throughout the house. Every now and then, with my mouth watering, I would glance into the kitchen to see if a chance could be had, regardless of the consequences, for a taste of the succulently sweet cobbler.

Security was exceedingly tight because of Becky's ongoing dinner preparations, so I resigned myself to taking a short nap. As I closed my eyes with the cobbler's aroma still tugging at me, my mind shifted back to my childhood days growing up in the mountains of West Virginia.

The ending of spring and the beginning of summer were joyous occasions for us kids of Cedar Grove, West Virginia. With school finally out of the way, now was the time for us kids who lived up Horsemill Holler to focus our attentions on the more important things of life. These included Little League ball-playing, catching lizards and frogs, and swimming in the "crick." Most important of all was earning summer spending money.

All of the families living in Horsemill Holler were poor, as far as

money goes, so we youngsters had to earn our own cash for the various summer activities we enjoyed that cost money. Some of these were swimming in the newly installed public pool, going to the picture show, or playing, as our parents would say, "those damned pinballs."

Delivering papers, mowing grass, weed-sickling, hoeing gardens, and picking blackberries were just some of our money-making endeavors. The last was the best of all. Blackberry picking was one of the means by which we enjoyed our world in the mountains.

This work, which wasn't working at all, provided us with not only spending money but also with some of our greatest summer adventures. New paths through the mountains, caves for exploring and for "fendin' off Injuns," places to go hunting when squirrel season opened, and new log cabin sites were just some of the discoveries that led to high-mountain adventure.

It doesn't take much gear to pick berries. We wore clothes that could stand being tattered and torn by briars and waterproof boots for wading in the "cricks." Usually we did our wading barefooted though. We used coffee cans with handles made with wire passed through holes poked in the sides with a nail and a fair sized rock. We also used a sturdy walking stick which could be used as a weed-knocker, path-maker, or a carrying stick for totin' full cans of berries down the mountain, and as a club for "whuppin'" silly those no-legged critters: copperheads, rattlesnakes, and anything else with scales that slithered among the berry vines, or "s" curved through the cricks. Many full cans of berries have been tossed in the air and lost while reaching for what appeared to be a large berry only to have that same berry reach back at us. That's when we hauled it, and I don't mean coal!

Where to pick berries wasn't ever a problem up our holler. They grew everywhere the sun shined and even places on has to pump the sunshine in. Berries grow along the cricks, beside the dirt roads, up on the mountain sides, just everywhere! Yet, when we picked berries to sell, we had to know where the biggest and the most berries were found. We kept these patches secret because we didn't want anyone cutting into our picture show money.

Getting us close to nature was something picking berries did for us also. Starting in the early morning when everything was covered with dew, we'd encounter all types of animals. There were always deer and rabbits darting across the road ahead of us, and we heard squirrels barking at each other from the trees. Coons and possums, slowly heading home after a night out, could also be observed. But mostly there were birds.

All types of birds made their home in our holler. There were deep red

cardinals, which we called “tip” birds because of the “Tip-tip, tip-tip” sound they make, and slate-grey catbirds, blue jays, woodpeckers peckin’ “Tat-tat-tat, tat-tat-tat,” and wild turkeys calling to mates on other ridges. We would also encounter mountain pheasants that scared the dickens out of us when they flushed right from under our feet in a sudden flurry of feathers and whooshing air.

Growing up in the mountains provided us kids with some of the most beautiful sights we would ever see. Standing on top of a mountain in summer looking out over the land was like staring at a great big, lumpy, green quilt much like the ones our grannies made by hand. In the early morning, the mountains looked like a steamy jungle with mist rising out of all the hollers at the same time. This creates a very eerie effect.

Sunset was the neatest time. The Kanawha River that flows through our valley appeared as a long silk ribbon winding around the base of the mountains. It is at sunset that one can tell why these mountains are called Blue Ridge. They take on all shades of blue and purple as the sun goes down, making them a very pleasant and beautiful sight to behold.

Picking berries gives one an appetite too, not to mention a powerful thirst. This was no reason for alarm because we mountain kids could always find plenty to eat and drink. First were the berries themselves, which we’d gobble by the handfuls. People could always tell where we’d been just by looking at our purple-stained hands and grinning mouths.

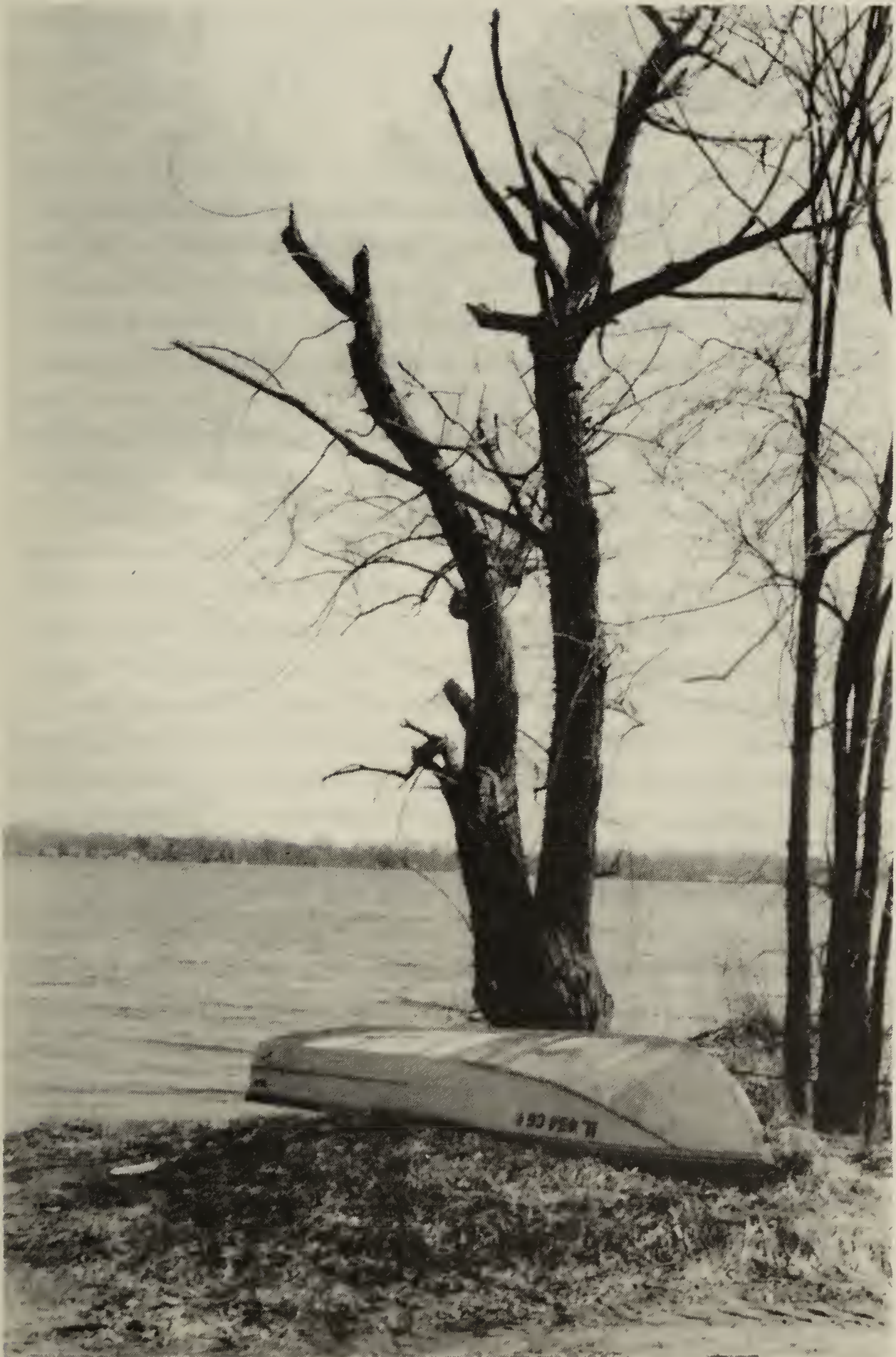
We also ate an assortment of other fruits and nuts because we know where all the fruit and nut trees grew wild in the mountains. There were golden apples, fuzzy peaches, plump plums, wild cherries, grapes walnuts and paw paws growing in our holler. We never went hungry even if we stayed all day in the mountains. Nor did we go thirsty. All the mountain streams around us had clear ice-cold water cascading down the mountain troughs. They could be located every hundred yards or so, and they provided not only drinking water, but also a cool respite from the midday heat. After tromping through sticker patches, climbing up hills and such, we’d get extremely tired, hot and sweaty. This was overcome by making a rock dam in a stream and sitting in the resulting pool of water that formed. Because of the water’s coldness, we would hold our breath while entering, making all sorts of weird facial expressions, but after getting used to the water, all that could be heard were “oohs!” and “aahs!” of relief. Hog heaven is what it was: just plain hog heaven!

The best reward of our cuts and scratches from the stickers, sore feet from walking up and down mountains and through cricks, and bites from

“skeeters” and chiggers wasn’t just spending money or high adventure. No, the best reward was blackberry cobbler, and boy could my granny make it! Blackberry cobbler is the best dessert there ever was, especially during the winter after all the berries were long gone. With a big scoop of ice-cream melting into berry filled valleys below its perch on a mountain of crust, this hot, steamy treat called forth then, as well as now, all the wonders and adventures of the past.

I snapped back from my youth in West Virginia to hear Becky calling from the kitchen that dinner was at long last ready. Jumping up startled, I couldn’t help but wonder, was that Becky’s voice, or my granny “hollerin’ ” up a mountainside, “Come and get it!”?

Dawn KRAFTOR



Who's on First? Abbott and Costello Come to Westville

As spring whispered by and summer approached, I looked forward to a thrilling season of softball fun. Men's softball can be very exhilarating and very intense. The competition is fierce at times. I was positive that this season would be no exception. I was going to participate in my first organized, and I use the term very loosely, sport while in prison. I had no idea what I was setting myself up for. It would prove to be a summer that I would never forget.

I had participated in many softball leagues before prison. To reiterate, competition was fierce, and the games intense. In prison, the teams are equally competitive, and the atmosphere probably a little more intense.

If I have left any doubt about the intensity of team sports in prison, examining some of the more creative names that are chosen for the teams will dispel any doubt that may be present. Rest assured, there are no team names as provincial as Cubs, Cardinals, or Dodgers, although this would seem appropriate; there are no Blue Jays, no Brewers (at least that the administration is aware of), and nobody would even consider naming a team the Angels! Our coaches are just a little bit more creative. Prison teams have such thought provoking names as TNT, Terminators, Hit Squad, Untouchables, and Death Row to name a few. It was sometimes very intimidating just walking on the field with teams named as such.

When I played softball before prison, winning was not always the big issue. There were a couple of factors a little more important. One was whether you looked good while playing. After all, a couple of the reasons that grown men put their bodies through such abuse was to prove a certain amount of macho, while at the same time trying to impress the numerous young ladies who faithfully attended the games to watch the men strut their stuff, (and sometimes make fools of themselves as they do it). Another reason much more important than winning was the fact that there would be several beers chilling themselves on ice, waiting to congratulate the "machomen" for a game well-played. The beers, as well as some of the ladies, could have cared less if the game was won or lost.

In prison, the factors are quite different. It does not mean diddly how

well one looks: we all look the same. Secondly, there are no incentives waiting for us after the game. Finally and probably the most important factor in prison sports, is the fact that winning is everything! The only thing waiting for us after a game is several hostile men roasting in the intense heat, ready to utterly humiliate and degrade the losers with no respect to anyone's feelings. Escape never looked as good as it did when eyeing the fence while making that long walk back to the dorm after losing a game. I finally realized what that "trip to the showers" meant to the big leaguers after giving up the grand slam homer in the bottom of the ninth inning, when their team was winning by three. I would soon become very used to the humiliation.

I have given you a basic idea of what intramural softball in prison is all about. I would now like to take you on a trip down memory lane with me. I want to turn your attention to the proverbial "worst nightmare." Imagine being a member of one of the two saddest teams in the yard. I found myself in that position. Join me now on a trip to the "twilight zone."

First, let's take a look at Westville's answer to the Angels. We have a team known as Prisoners For Christ, heretofore known as P for C. One could probably imagine the abuse this team took just because of their name. Their hearts were in the right place, but perhaps they should have stayed in church. Don't get me wrong. I'm not putting them down; in fact, I was originally a member of that team. I decided, when I saw their future potential, or lack thereof, to join the other of the teams that comprise my terrible twosome. As it turned out, however, I did not make a better decision. I could liken the move to deciding not to take a flight because I had a fear of flying, and booking a ticket for passage on the Titanic.

I parted company with the Christian brothers, and joined a team called Bad Company 2. They are not to be confused with, and no disrespect to, Bad Company 1, who were runners-up here two years ago. I hope I am not here to see Bad Company 3: Manson's Return! What I thought would be a good move at the time would soon turn very ugly. To say that P for C and Bad Company 2 were lousy teams would have the same impact as saying that an atom is small. At the end of the regular season, P for C had a win-loss record of 0-11. Bad Company 2 was a little better at 4-7. Two of Bad Company's victories, unfortunately, were victories by forfeit. Both teams were glad to see the regular season end. It was time for the tournament.

No softball league would be complete without the post-season tournament. Both P for C and Bad Company 2 were glad when the

tournament started because they were once again on the same win-loss level as the other teams in the league. Everyone entered the tournament with no wins and no losses. This fact would change rapidly, and it would not be a pretty sight.

The tournament was a double elimination affair, which meant a team had to be humiliated twice before it was safe from any further embarrassment. After the first loss, a team is thrust into the loser's bracket, which is like having one foot in the grave, as they say. The team eliminated first usually has to take the most abuse. Struggling to stay afloat, while watching another team going down for the last time, is as fun as it gets for some teams. However, it can be very painful watching for the final "bubbles" of a drowning ball team to rise to the surface when one knows that one's own bubbles will soon be rising. On the other hand, it holds a certain morbid sense of bliss.

It was no surprise to anyone that P for C and Bad Company 2 were the first two teams paired in the loser's bracket. We all know that the loser of this game would be thrown, with great bodily force I might add, out of the tournament and into a living nightmare.

Having too much fun in prison is highly frowned upon by the administration; therefore, I will not be able to recount all of the events of the aforementioned entertainment fiasco. I will, however, relate some of the highlights that would make any bloopers or sports follies tape look like a "Wild Kingdom" documentary on the mating habits of the common flea.

We began with a toss of the umpire's ball-strike counter, since having a coin is a Class A offense, softball game or not. Bad Company's woes began immediately: we lost the toss. P for C was to have somewhat of an advantage; they were to have last bats. This could also prove to be a bad situation, because P for C would get first crack at being humiliated on defense. I guess one could say neither team won the toss.

Having last bats is usually an advantage. In this case, however, that was not necessarily so. It is only an advantage when a team has a shot at winning a close game in the last half of the last inning, or when a team is winning a game and it has last bats, it does not have to bat in its half of the last inning. I have never considered the latter to be much of an advantage; when a team is winning, it would like nothing more than to try and put a little icing on the cake. On this afternoon, however, P for C enjoyed none of those privileges.

The umpire yelled for all balls to be thrown in. This was a sign that the game was about to begin. We all waited for the left fielder to retrieve the

ball that rolled between the shortstop's legs during infield warm up. The tension and anticipation of many laughs mounted. The action on the Bad Company sideline was in full swing (no pun intended). After the batting lineup was read for the fifth time, everyone knew the general batting order, and the game was ready to begin. Or, was it?

The umpire yelled, "Play ball!" At the same time, a few Bad Company players, wondering who was to occupy the coaches' boxes, yelled, "Who's on first?" No softball game can begin without someone manning the coaches' boxes next to first and third bases. That person's job is to direct any player lucky enough to reach first base about which direction to go in order to reach second base. For these teams, this was usually not a great job.

As the first batter stepped to the plate, the obligatory chants: "Start us off," or "A little poke," were heard. Someone was also yelling, "Who's on deck?" So much for knowing the batting order.

Everyone noticed that P for C was starting a new pitcher. His name was "Crowbar." Everyone had some idea about why he was called Crowbar, although no one was willing to ask him! Anyone who knows anything about the game, knows that in slow pitch softball, the ball is thrown underhand with a 6- to 12-foot arch. To be a strike, the ball must land in an area bordered by the width of home plate and up to 17 inches to the rear of the plate. It doesn't matter where it crosses the plate as long as it lands in this area. If a pitch meets these criteria, it's a strike. Someone forgot to inform Mr. Crowbar of this knowledge.

The first pitch landed about two feet in front of the plate. Instead of hitting the ground and rolling to the catcher, it hit the ground with a thud, and never moved. The ball seemed as though it had a spike in it; who knew for sure? Crowbar threw about 15 straight pitches in similar fashion. In fact, he walked in the first run. It was obvious to everyone, except Mr. Crowbar, that a pitching change was in order. Who was going to tell a man named Crowbar that his pitching day was over? I would have hated to be the coach that had to make that death march to the mound. Finally, a meeting was held at the mound, and a pitching change was made. The new pitcher was at least able to throw strikes, and the game really began.

At the end of the second inning, the score was 9-7 in favor of P for C. In Bad Company's half of the third inning, however, the nightmare began for P for C. The score quickly became 10-9, in Bad Company's favor, with the bases loaded and no outs. Bad Company's answer to Mr. Clean was up to bat. His name was Jerry. We sometimes called him Big Jerry or Big J.

He was probably the best known inmate at Westville. He is 7 feet tall, weighs about 240 pounds, and has the heart of a 12-year-old. He is really a great guy; I had the pleasure of rooming with him during his last four months of incarceration. Big J may have left Westville, but his memory reigns supreme.

The thing that made Big J so funny was the fact that he ran with all the grace of a penguin, but I would have been willing to bet a penguin has at least one hair. Big J was as bald as Curly, the famed member of the Three Stooges, and about as funny. Big J loved to be in the limelight. He was definitely in hog heaven at that precise moment.

All batters, to save time, start with a count of one strike and one ball. Big J watched the next three pitches go by. The two balls and one strike resulted in a full count. He couldn't have gotten himself any more in the limelight. Time seemed to go in slow motion as the next pitch came arching in. Big J was either going to strike out, walk, or get a hit, and this pitch would decide. Big J swung with all the strength he could muster. There was a very audible and distinct "ping" as the ball struck the aluminum bat.

"Run!" everyone yelled. As Big J touched first base, the ball hit the ground two feet in front of the left-center fielder, who made no effort, it seemed, to catch it. One run had already scored. Everyone was running. Big J started for second; another run scored. Big J was not fast. As he was about halfway between first and second bases, the left-center fielder picked up the ball and made the throw that he hoped would result in the first out. Everyone knew the play would be close. The third runner scored, leaving the only possible play to be made at second base. "Slide!" we all yelled! The throw was perfect; it was a perfect line drive throw that reached the receiving fielder about eight inches off the ground. It is too bad no one informed the left-center fielder that when a player is running to second base, one does not throw the ball to the right fielder!

After all the dust cleared from the slide, Big J was safe at second. He saw where the ball was and began his journey for third base. It was a gutsy move for a guy with the speed of a penguin. When he got to close third, he lunged into another dusty slide.

The right fielder, wondering how he ever got involved in this play in the first place, made the throw to third base. As perfect as the first fielder's throw was, this throw was equally as bad; it went about five feet over the third baseman's head.

When the dust cleared again, Big J knew that he had a clear shot at home. As quickly as he could, Big J clumsily slid home. Big J was the only

one who knew he had a clear shot. Because of all the dust from the slide, no one else knew where the ball was. As he got close to home plate, everything became very quiet. I didn't know what to do. Naturally, Big J thought he should slide; after all, it seemed appropriate.

Once more, everyone waited for the dust to clear; the air was thick with anticipation as we watched the umpire for the call at the plate. Safe! Big J was safe! Everyone was screaming, yelling, and making fun of the P for C defense. What should have been a routine out for P for C turned into a very sloppy, very dusty, and very humiliating, in-the-park home run. Big J got four RBIs. No one had the heart to tell Big J that you can not get a home run off of errors. We let him have his moment of glory.

From that point on, it was all Bad Company 2. We scored 19 runs in our half of the inning. The score had gone from 9-7 in favor of P for C, to 26-9 in favor of Bad Company 2; at least eight runs in the bottom of the third inning must score to avoid being beaten by the 10-run rule, and ending the game early. Bad Company put P for C down with three straight outs; the game was over. Final score: 26-9, in favor Bad Company 2!

P for C was out of the tournament, and Bad Company 2 would have to face another, much better opponent. I'm not sure which was worse! At least P for C would have to suffer no more humiliation. Bad Company 2 would not be so fortunate. We lost our next game by the 10-run rule, 13-3. Now, it was our turn to face the music, and what a blue tune it was.

The season was finally over for the two teams. We might not have left anyone with good memories, but no one will ever forget Jerry, or the day that these two teams were able to revive the memory of Abbot and Costello at Westville. Instead of asking, "Who's on first?" we should have wondered what the guy's name was that was responsible for this sports fiasco. I think he was the left-center fielder. Or was he the right fielder? "Who's on first?"

About the Authors and Photographers

Marjorie Berry

"I am an aspiring student residing in Kouts, Indiana. My major is Education. I enjoy writing, especially about Native Americans."

Gary Davis

"I am a business major at the present time. My future plans are to obtain a degree in Addictions Counseling and eventually become an educator. My passion for writing will someday lead me to publication of a novel. It is by the high standard of achievement set forth by my peers here at Westville that my desire to achieve academic excellence has been fueled."

James Dowd

"I live in La Porte, and I am a student of Elementary Education. My interests include music, art, and collecting *Swamp Thing* comic books. I have been writing for several years and plan to continue. The many authors I admire are H.P. Lovecraft, Arthur Macken, Dean R. Koontz, and T.S.Eliot."

Jennifer Edwards

"I am an English major from Chesterton, and, to me, black-and-white photography is the ultimate challenge of blending light and subject matter to achieve an expression of what I feel when I look through my viewfinder."

Joseph Eggleston

"My major is English, with an emphasis on creative writing. I also have hopes of perhaps teaching for a time, and a professional aviation minor is 'in the wings' as well. My first choice is writing, however, and my dream career is that of a best selling novelist and columnist. Short stories are merely a beginning for me, though I immensely enjoy writing them."

Michael Gowin

"A senior BLS major emphasizing humanities, I plan to graduate in December 1992. Upon the completion of my degree, I intend to pursue graduate-level theological studies at a midwestern seminary. I have a strong interest in teaching and writing and would

consider teaching at the college level, but am still open to other options.”

James Henderson

“I am a senior, and I reside in Westville. I am in the Liberal Studies program and plan to pursue a career in Accounting.”

Gregory Hunter

“I am 20 years old, and, as the youngest child and only son of Jimmy and Linda Hunter, I have been a lifelong resident of Porter, Indiana. Majoring in television and film production, I plan to graduate in 1995. My favorite literary works are science fiction; I hope someday to write science fiction books of my own.”

Robert Knight

“I am 33 years of age and a veteran of the Armed Forces. I am currently majoring in General Business. One of my career goals is to own a successful business. My future writing aspirations include a collection of essays, short stories, and possibly a novel.”

Dawn KRAFTOR

“I believe in fairy tales, and I believe in dreams. And I believe that God said, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light, for there is nothing God cannot do.”

Harold Mize

“I’m 47; I grew up in the Southern California L.A. area. I served for 28 months in river patrol boats in Vietnam. I’ve worked as a mechanic most of my life. ‘Vietnam 101’ is my first serious effort at writing.”

James Norris (Wolf Ghost)

“Thirty-four years ago I was granted the privilege of being born into this world. The wind, the rain, and all the forces of nature have since comforted me and swept me through the journey of my days here. To these forces I owe the course of my life which is to major in archeology and the biological sciences with a goal of passing that knowledge on to others. I plan to write until my journey in this world is finished. My only hope is that someone

...somewhere will view my words...and smile. Everything else is secondary."

Kelly Summa

"I am currently in Pre-Nursing at PNC, and I will enter the Nursing program in the fall. I hope to earn an Associate's degree and work as a Registered Nurse in a local hospital. As for my writing, I would love to pursue it further, but for now, it remains an enjoyable pastime."

Connie Szawara

"After graduating, I plan to go to graduate school to pursue an M.S. in mathematics. Photography has been my interest for two years because it is a forgotten artistic medium that reflects the true essence of our connection to the physical world."

Betty Vania

"After spending several years teaching in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Japan, I am now enrolled in PNC's School of Nursing, and I hope someday to incorporate my cultural adaptation and educational skills into nursing. I plan to write educational material for the nursing profession's more effective and appreciative handling of the ethnic and cultural diversities of today's population."

Terry Vaupel

"I am currently a first-year student. I write primarily as a hobby. I am 42 years old, have four children and two grandchildren. After spending 20 years as a truck driver, I have decided to finish my education with the idea of changing careers."

Sharon White

"I am a senior, and the Assistant Director of the Writing Center; I will receive my BLS degree in December, 1992. Counseling adults, specifically people with AIDS and their families, is my career goal. In the past year, I have sent several manuscripts to publishers, since to be published is one of my goals in writing. My work is appearing in *Portals* for the third time, and I admit, 'Writing is a drug I cannot imagine living without.' "



North Central